CAVALIER

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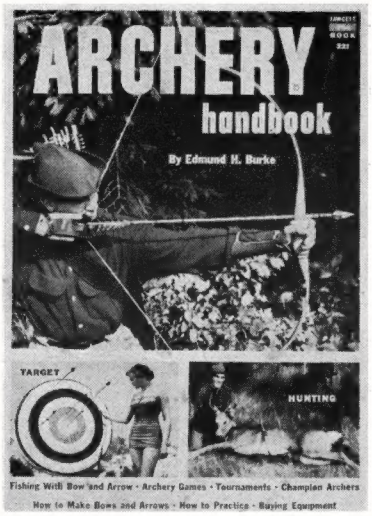
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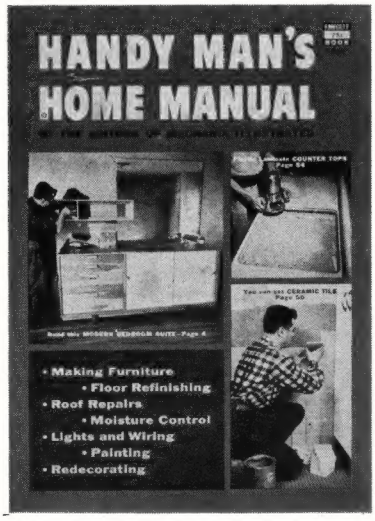

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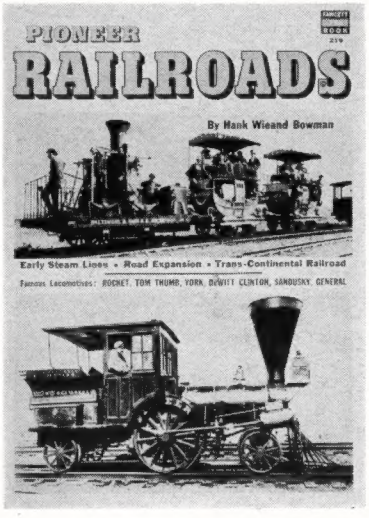

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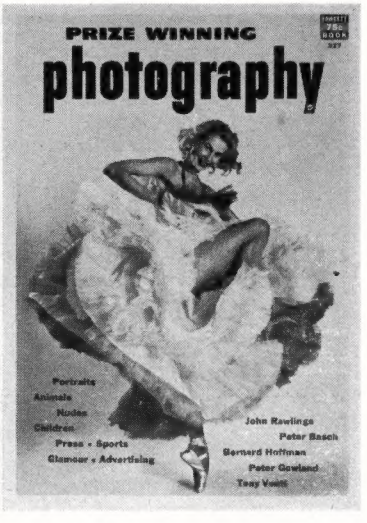

BLOOD doesn't grow on TREES

Neither can you dig it up out of a mine in the ground. Human blood is manufactured in only one place—the human body.

Vast quantities of blood are needed—urgently needed—to help save the lives of the men wounded in combat, and of the hurt and sick in hospitals at home. Blood is also needed to produce gamma globulin, the new serum that promises to do much to protect children from polio and measles.

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Isn't it worthwhile to take a few minutes time to save a human life? Give blood—keep on giving blood. How? Call your Red Cross, Armed Forces or Community Blood Donor Center today!

GIVE BLOOD

...give it again and again

NATIONAL BLOOD PROGRAM

YOU SAID IT!.... Letters to CAVALIER

MORE ON BUTCH

In your June issue you published James D. Horan's account of the Mystery of Butch Cassidy's End, which is of great interest to me. Since the noted leader of the Wild Bunch was my father's brother and since my folks saw fit to name me after Uncle Leroy I am interested in gathering all the factual information I can about his life. To my knowledge no one of the family ever received word from Butch Cassidy after he left the U. S. Will you please forward Mr. Horan's address in order that I may contact him for more information?

Leroy W. Parker
Camp Verde, Arizona

CAVALIER *is glad to increase the Cassidy ken of Leroy's kin.*

METER MAN

In your August issue of CAVALIER I noted an interesting article on the parking meter problem by your writer, Irving Wallace concerning Minot, North Dakota. We have this same problem and many of us feel the same as Mr. Howard Henry does about parking meters.

Ernest L. Messner
Los Angeles, Calif.

Three cheers for Howard Henry "The Man Who Killed the Parking Meter!" Too bad there aren't more people like him around. Parking meters are the biggest insult to Americans since the British tried to tax the tea!

George R. Maynard
Littleton, N. H.

I have just read "The Man Who Killed the Parking Meter" in the August issue of your most interesting publication. Like most articles on this subject, the writer leaves the impression that the city officials who favor parking meters are selffish, grafting and against the farmers, ranchers and poor city folks. I do not think it proper to charge people for parking space on tax maintained streets but what are the officials to do? At eight a. m. every parking space is filled with cars belonging to people who work in the area. There is no space left for shoppers like the hero of your article. Parking meters are the only solution so far to the problem. They keep the all day parkers off the street and make it possible for shoppers to find a place, whereas without them, there would be utterly no chance.

It seems to me that before condemning the parking meter, some suggestion should be made for dividing up the small amount of parking available on our streets and not letting the first car parked stay there indefinitely. What is the suggestion of those who want the parking meter "killed." I do not think the parking meter is the ideal solution of this problem, but it seems to fill the bill until something better is brought out.

E. A. Roberts
Carlsbad, New Mex.

CAVALIER

"Tell them, party or no party, there are people in this building who want to sleep!"

CAVALIER

"Before I leave for the office, Dear, here's your breakfast in bed."

WIFE BEATERS?

Why are your cartoons always so hard on women? You'd think men were the salt of the earth and that woman just existed for man's convenience—to do all the work and get laughed at in the bargain. Keep it up and I'll not only stop reading your magazine but I won't let my husband buy it anymore! I'll bet all your editors beat their wives!

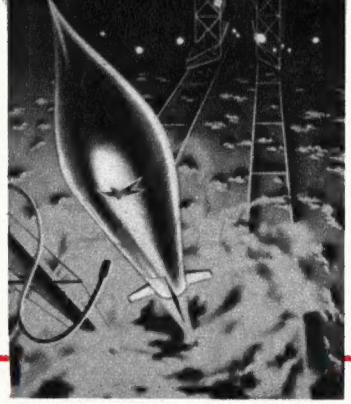
Mrs. Cameron Norman
Whippany, N. J.

As for our cartoons being hard on women, we think they're funnier that way. As for your not reading CAVALIER *anymore, all women are party crashers as far as this magazine is concerned, and the less heard from them the better. They're supposed to be home taking care of the kids. And when it comes to your old man letting you take away his favorite magazine we'll wager the World Association of Wife Beaters will be increased by one member if you carry out your threat.*

NOVEL FAN

Really got a big kick out of the last novel, 'The Judas Hour' in your August issue. Keep these novels coming. They help make CAVALIER the biggest quarter's worth in the men's field.

Raymond Richard
Clearwater, Fla.



OUTER SPACE may already be under the control of a Russian space satellite.

INSIDE INFO from Al Rosen tells why the Indians will win the A. L. pennant.

TURKISH DELIGHT Nejla Ates doesn't care about Hollywood censors.

SNAKE HUNTER Bill Smith has buried more than 20,000 killers to date.

CAVALIER

OCTOBER, 1954 **A FAWCETT PUBLICATION**

Stephen Horvath .....*Art Editor* Bob Curran .....*Associate Editor*

James A. Skardon.....*Editor*

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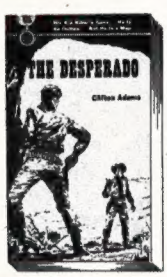

BEST-SELLING NOVEL COMPLETE IN THIS ISSUE

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THE DESPERADO

by Clifton Adams

VOL. 2 NO. 7

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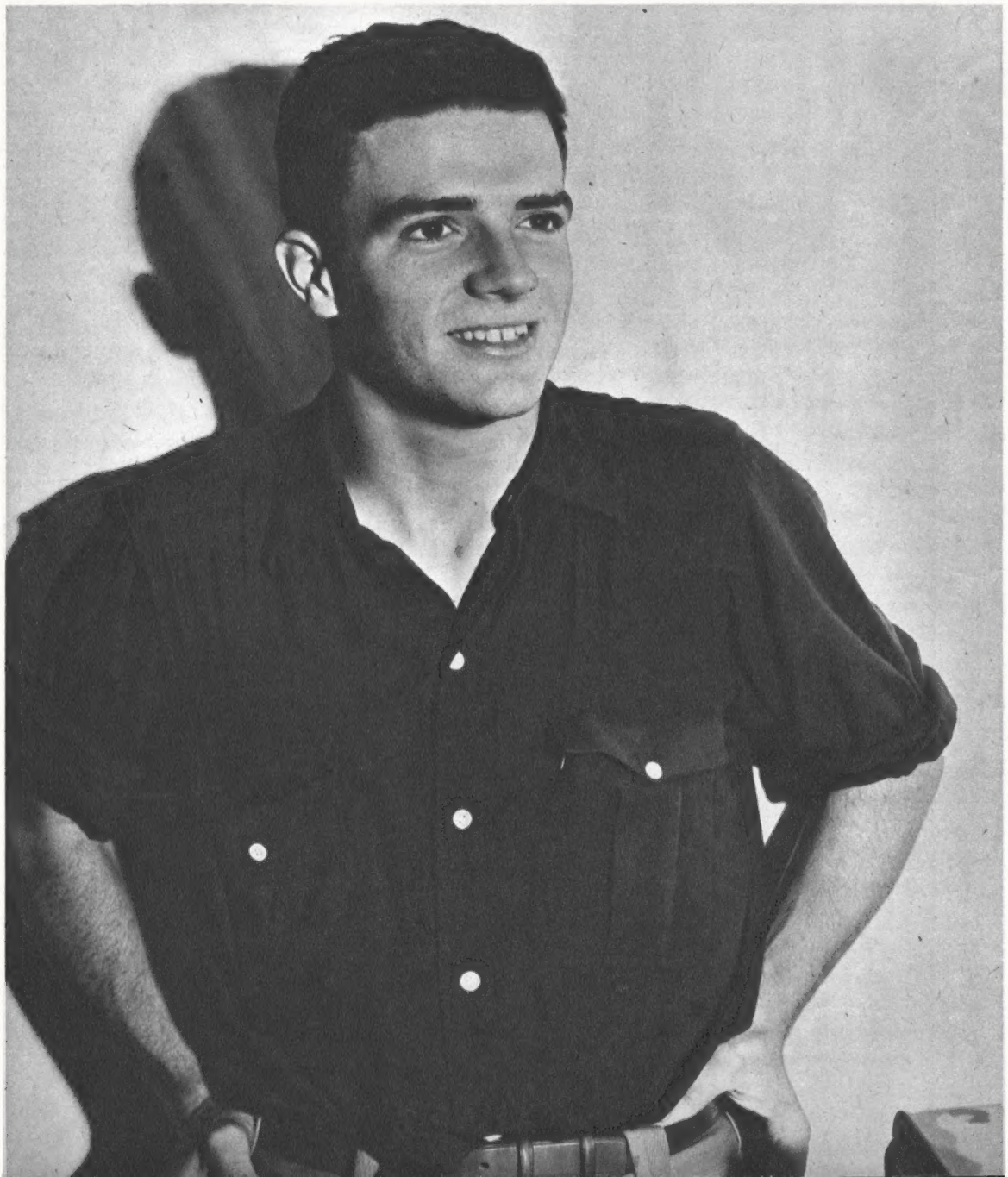
Cavalier of the month

JON LINDBERGH

Deep-sea diver, mountain climber, ocean explorer; he lives the bold and active life of a modern cavalier

Young and fearless, Jon, like his father the famed flyer, dotes on danger, lives for adventure and action.

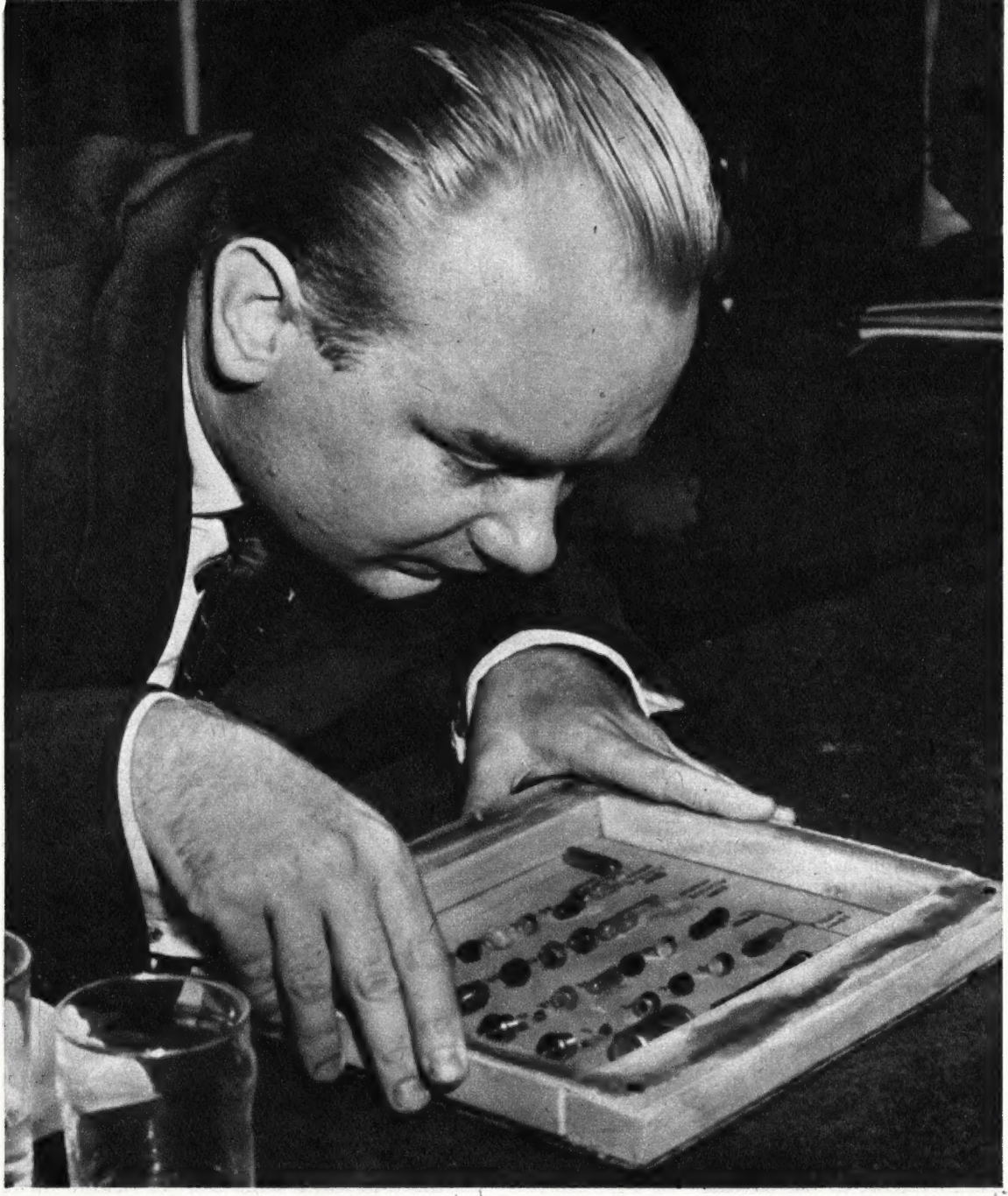


Lindbergh holds a plankton net on return from ocean expedition which made important deep-sea discoveries.

CAVALIER is dedicated to the idea that modern man is as much a believer in the active, rugged, and exciting way of life as were the old-time cavaliers. Bold and dashing, those fellows with the swords and boots liked nothing better than a good scrap or a tight spot. Today in all fields there are young men who work and play in the tradition of the cavaliers of old. They are fair, but they give no quarter and ask no quarter. They like challenges and they like risks. With the idea of forwarding this spirit, the editors of this magazine will choose each month the young man who, in our opinion, comes the closest to living up to the standards of great cavaliers past and present. As the first to be honored in this new series we have chosen Jon Lindbergh. Son of a famous father—who was a cavalier himself—Jon has already made his mark as a scientist and adventurer. Whether it is a towering mountain or a cave beneath the sea he tackles it with a will, sometimes for the sheer excitement, often for the good of science. Young, strong, and fearless, Jon Lindbergh is a cavalier in the finest sense of the word. As such CAVALIER and its readers salute him. •

Shown after daring swim at Bower Cave, Cal. He went down 150-ft., found and explored big submerged cave.

Leader of a futile fight to save a fellow mountaineer, Jon, second from right, helps bring down friend's body.



Red agent Khokhlov examines poison bullets employed by the Russians to make sure assassination victims die.

HOW THE RED ASSASSINS WORK

In one of the most shocking stories of Red terror ever told, an escaped Russian agent reveals the methods the dread secret police use to destroy their enemies

Terence Prittie and Stanley Karnow

The address was 3 Inhiedener Strasse—a grayish, middle-class apartment house in Frankfurt, Germany.

It was almost dark one cold afternoon last February. A blond, stocky man wearing rimless glasses and a heavy overcoat climbed the stairs of the building. He walked deliberately. He knew exactly where he was going, though he had never been there before. Without hesitation, he stopped at a door and knocked. After a moment it opened, and a middle-aged gentleman peered out.

"You are Herr Okolovich?" asked the caller in flawless German.

"I am."

"Then I must talk to you privately. It is most urgent."

The two men stepped uneasily into the living-room, sat down and faced each other. Seconds passed in silence and seemed like hours. Suddenly the stranger broke into Russian and said, "I am Captain Khokhlov of the MVD, and I am here to kill you."

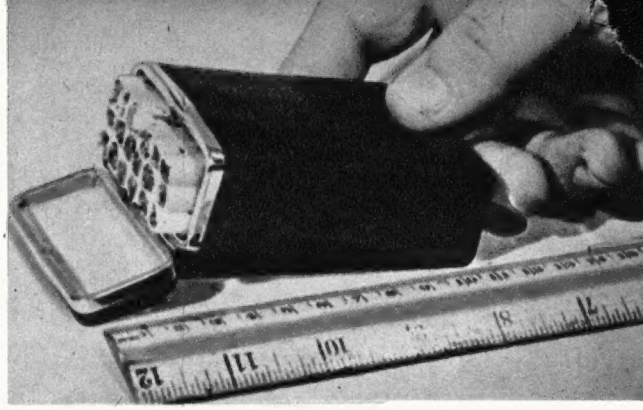
The explosion of those words has been heard around the world. They announced the greatest story of spies and terror told since the war, and they have led the Western Powers to a ringside view of the workings of the dread Russian secret police. The story is also the tale of one man, how he wrestled with his own soul, and how his conscience won.

The man is Nikolai Evgenyvich Khokhlov, one of the most trusted agents of the MVD, the Soviet Union's underground terror organization.

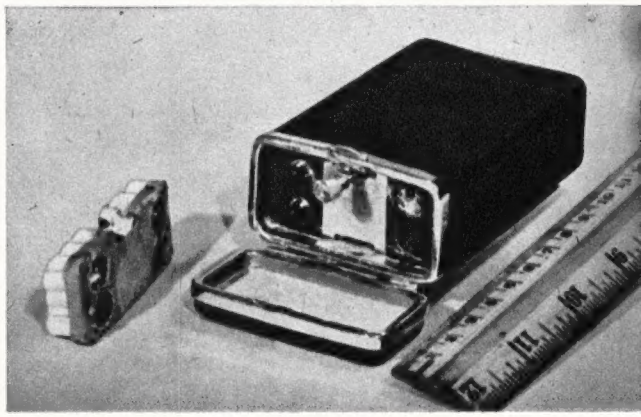
Nikolai Khokhlov became a terrorist almost by accident. Born in the town of Nishni-Novgorod, some 250 miles east of Moscow, he came from one of the most nationalistic areas of Russia. His father was a confirmed Communist, and young Nikolai followed closely in his political footsteps. In 1938, when he was barely sixteen, he joined the Komsomol Bolshevik Youth Movement and devoted all his spare time to Communist activities. But as he grew older, he developed a curious yearning to become an actor, and an even stranger yen to be a professional whistler. "Artistic whistling," he called it.

Khokhlov eventually got his chance to act. By the time he was in college he had displayed enough proficiency to earn cigarette money playing bit parts in plays and movies. He hoped one day to become a movie director. But fate was reserving him for a role bigger than any he'd ever dreamed of playing on a stage or before a camera.

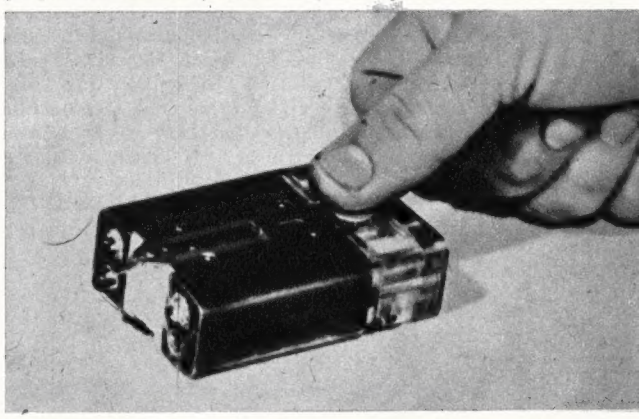
When the Germans invaded [*Continued on page* 54]



Seemingly harmless this dummy cigarette case carries slugs containing half-gram of deadly poison potassium cyanide.

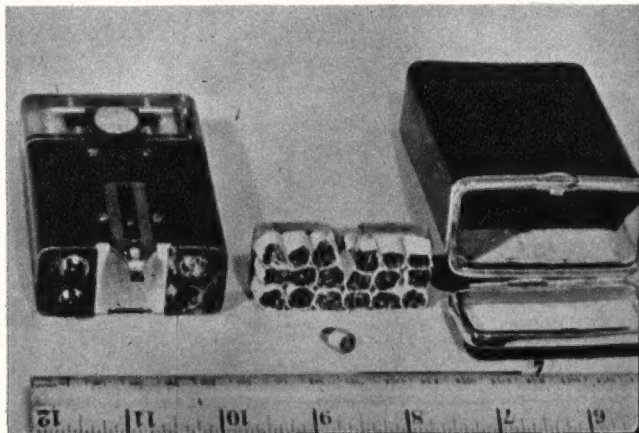


The poison bullets contain enough chemical to kill 10 people if taken orally, 100 if they are injected into blood.

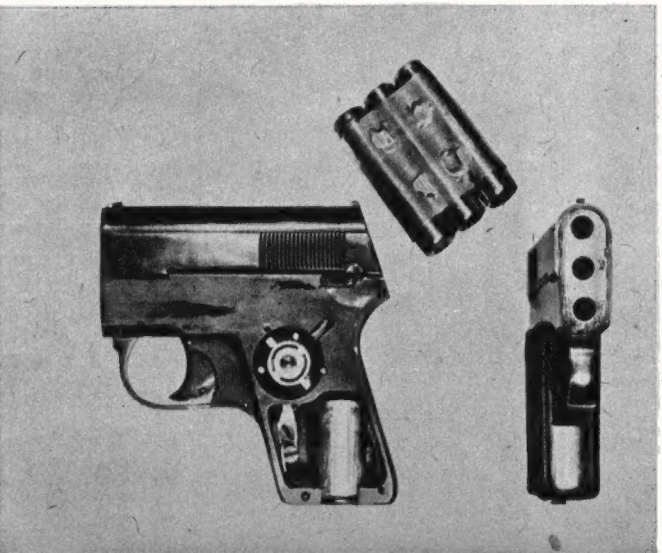


Weapon is fired by pressing button; powered by 1½ volt battery. The idea is to offer victim a cigarette then shoot.

Bullets whiz out of hollow cigarettes, enter victim's hand. Poisoned he dies in seconds. The shot makes little noise.



Tiny pistol less than four inches long was especially designed for assassination. The pistol is fired electrically.



HIGH ADVENTURE

Men Against

The explosion hit without warning. Then as we fought for our lives, the sharks and the night closed in on us

By Harold Haley

Illustrated by John Floherty, Jr.

When the sportfishing boat *Spare Time* suddenly blew up that sunny afternoon of July 27, 1952, the tremendous force of the explosion lifted me straight from the deck, catapulted me through the air and plunged me into the icy, shark-infested waters of the Pacific!

An instant before I'd been sitting there on the rail bench near the bait tank, among a cheerful group of ocean fishermen—then, without warning, came a blinding, searing flash of light, a deafening concussion, and I was hurtling skyward!

The shock of that splash into the frigid waters forced a gasp of air into my lungs and helped clear my senses. But I was still dazed, with the echoes of that explosion rolling like an artillery duel in my head. I didn't feel any pain, right then. Maybe it was like a mortar shell exploding near a man in the front lines. You could be filled with fragments of metal, but you don't always feel anything right away. Later, I felt the numbing ache in my left ankle and realized that it had been shattered when the deck of the *Spare Time* went up under me.

Instinctively, in those first few moments in the water, I grabbed a plank, and held on for grim death. I was recovering fast, and now I had a chance to see how the other survivors were making it. Men floundered all around me, clinging to bits of wreckage, their eyes glazed, terror and bewilderment contorting their features.

The aft section of the *Spare Time* had disappeared, and the smashed forward part of the sleek, 33-foot fishing craft was sinking beneath the waves.

Somewhere in the terrible, brilliant sunshine a man was screaming.

I'd just told myself, "Haley, hang onto your plank. Don't let go or you'll sink like a rock." But I had to go after the guy.

I spotted him about 20 feet away, thrashing desperately to keep his head above water. I let go of my plank, and swam over to him. I've heard that a drowning man will always try to strangle his rescuer. This man didn't. He just turned over on his back, sobbing now, and I towed him back to the wreckage.

That took a lot out of me, but I don't think anyone could have stopped the fellow from what he did

the Sea

Men Against the Sea

The three survivors, Sachse, Haley, the author, and Knight manage a grin as they are taken to shore by a Coast Guard cutter. Sachse and Knight gave most of the credit for their survival to Haley. They were adrift 18 hours.

then. Although he was safe on the little island of interlocking planks, he began ripping off his clothes and throwing them away. Then, still yelling, he slipped overside and was swallowed by the sea. It was hard to believe that a human being could disappear so fast from this world.

I was looking now for two of my own personal friends who'd come along on the charter-boat trip. Carl Jackson was nowhere in sight. He must have been killed outright in the blast. Then I saw Al Barber. He was floating upright, waist and shoulders above the surface, buoyant, but rigid. I swam toward him, but when I was within a few feet, he quietly and swiftly sank from view. I made several futile dives. It was no use, so I swam around, helping the other struggling men toward the wreckage.

I hadn't realized, until now with my friends gone, that I'd been caught in a stark, real-life drama in which only courage, endurance and a lot of luck was going to pull any of us through. I wasn't afraid, just then. Not until darkness came, and men were dying all around me, did I have to fight off a feeling of terror.

Right now, I began to help Wes Wiggins, the brave skipper and owner of the *Spare Time*. He was swimming back and forth, collecting life belts. Between the two of us we got the preservers on everyone except the skipper, himself. He did without one until later when the sea began claiming the lives of our comrades, and then he took one from a man who died.

Clinging to the bits of wreckage, we counted heads. There were nine of us left—all strangers to one another, yet banded together in a grim struggle against the sea. Facing us was an eternity of hours!

I've heard it argued that a shark will never attack a human being. Don't you believe it, brother! I still have scars on my body to prove exactly how ferocious a shark can get!

It was amazing how quickly the sharks gathered around our little group of castaways. I thought the disaster must have occurred near a school of the hungry monsters. Capt. Wiggins said they'd been attracted by the scattering of sardines from the bait tank.

But here the sharks were, white bellies gleaming, dorsal fins circling us in a narrowing dance of death!

I know about sharks because one big devil, at least eight feet in length, came up under me and took my foot in his jaws. He could have snapped the leg right off, but he didn't strike like that. He mouthed my leg like a dog will pick up a rubber ball.

I just pulled my foot right out of his mouth, and left him mostly shoe leather. I felt those rows of wicked teeth tearing the flesh. It was a hot, agonizing pain like a surgeon probing into you without an anesthetic. I thought I was going to faint, but I told myself, "Haley, you old scissor-bill, you can't quit now! You aren't going to die."

I dragged myself up on the wreckage and selected a short length of two-by-four for a club.

The sharks were making short, frantic runs at us now, incensed perhaps, by my blood.

When the big fellow came swirling back, right on the surface, I smacked him on the nose with that two-by-four—hard! He dived and raced away like a berserk torpedo.

Some of the other men were now following my example, striking the water with boards and baffing the sharks on the snoots when they came within range. The sharks withdrew to a respectful distance—always a watchful, menacing ring around our tiny haven of derelict timbers. A gigantic sea-lion surfaced and watched us curiously, his golden-brown hide gleaming in the sun. He was good company, but he didn't stay around long. Gulls had appeared from nowhere, diving raucously for scraps of bait.

Life Guard Lt. Fred Bleecker with wreckage of the Spare Time, which blew up off Catalina Island, July 27, 1952.

We'd been in the water less than an hour when a plane passed overhead. The men shouted and waved, but I knew it was useless. The search for us wouldn't begin until long after nightfall when the *Spare Time* would be reported overdue at her Santa Monica landing. It was now about five p. m. Sunday afternoon and we were drifting in a rough sea far off the usual course of other fishing boats or pleasure craft. Every wave tossed and rolled the wreckage, and I knew we must somehow hang on throughout the night.

"I'd give a sawbuck for a cigarette," said one of the men through chattering teeth.

"Don't be a piker I'd give a hundred," another said.

"I'd settle for just a drink of water," mumbled another. His lips were blue and parched.

"Make mine a double shot of brandy," I said, and I began wise-cracking and joking. Anything to cheer those guys up!

But they stared at the swirling leagues of water with primeval dread, knowing that they could expect no quarter from the sea. The wind, the cold and the bruising impact of the waves were already sapping away their strength.

Long before dark, the weakest of the men began losing their grip. I don't know how many times, Capt. Wiggins, myself, James Knight and young Richard Sachse swam out —sharks or no sharks—and hauled our failing comrades back to safety.

One of the first men to die breathed his last in my arms. I'd been holding him to the wreckage. He coughed, shuddered and was gone—just that fast! If you've ever suffered shock and exposure, you'll know how suddenly a man can die. There was nothing to do but let him float away, while I tried to help those who still clung to the tossing debris.

Just before dark, Capt. Wiggins decided to swim for help. I told him it was madness, that the Catalina Channel was a tough swim for the best professionals, even when smeared heavily with grease, and yet he would try to make it encumbered with clothes and a life jacket!

"I think I can reach the mainland," replied Wiggins stubbornly. "I've been figuring our drift. We're between ten and fourteen miles out, and we may be swept up by a current that'll carry us into the middle of the Pacific Ocean. I'm going!"

You couldn't stop this man, not with the heart he had. He kicked off from the wreckage and swam away.

Darkness came swiftly after that. I lay on my back, my injured leg throbbing miserably, my hands cut and swollen from fighting the wreckage. I looked up at the stars. I remember thinking they were like silver stallions grazing on the purple hillsides of the sky. I'm a practical business man, not a poet, but one gets strange thoughts when eternity is just around the corner.

Always, my thoughts returned homeward. Rowena, my wife, would be frantic with worry by now.

"I'm okay, gal," I said, whispering to her in the dark.

Why, sometime tomorrow she'd be waiting at the pier after we'd been rescued and I knew she would say: "Oh, Harold, you made it! You made it!"

"Sure, I made it for you, honey," I'd say.

I wasn't going to let it end any other way, was I? I recall looking down into the water, far down where phosphorous glowed like fields of stars, and seeing the copper-bright eyes of some weird sea-creatures. I was scared as hell!

It seemed a very long time ago, and yet it was the night before that the phone had rung and Carl Jackson said the albacore were running. It's exciting news when these ripping, slashing, fighting members of the tuna tribe appear in the Catalina Channel. You'd get down to the boat-landing at Santa Monica pier at four a. m. like I did!

We never hit a school, and we were on the way back from the island, trolling, when Capt. Wiggins throttled down to examine a chugging motor on the bait tank. It doesn't seem likely that a small, faulty motor on a bait tank could have caused the explosion. The *Spare Time* was a good fishing boat, and she'd recently been overhauled. It was as though the big engine and the main gasoline tanks blew up—or else we hit something!

There'd been 10 fishermen and two crew members then. Now only seven men clung to a few scraps of bobbing wreckage.

Not long after dark, we rose on the crest of a wave and could see the twinkling lights of the mainland. They looked wonderful, and for a moment our spirits mounted. But I knew the lights were much further away than they seemed, tantalizing as a mirage.

"We won't get picked up tonight," said Jack Fukanaga, a Japanese, "so I'm going to try to swim on in. I'm a good swimmer and I'll bring help."

He didn't say any more. He just shoved off.

A short while later, his companion and countryman, Leonard Yoshimo, vanished beneath the waves. He'd been helped for two hours by Buzz Sachse, a courageous lad of 16, but everyone was weakening rapidly.

"Keep your chins up a little longer—just a little longer, boys!" I'd yell at them.

I hadn't heard a sound from James Knight for some time, and no answer came when I called. I knew he'd drifted away, but there was some consolation in the fact that he was young, husky and had a good board to sustain his weight. A close bond of companionship had developed between Knight, Sachse and myself during the long struggle for survival. They were the kind of men you'd want to have beside you when the chips were down! Knight was a quiet and studious chap of 23. It would be far more rugged for him alone out there on that plank, but I felt he had the grit to hold on no matter where the currents took him.

By two a. m. after we'd been in the water for 10 hours, the big searchlight at San Pedro harbor became visible, flashing eerily through the mist. [*Continued on page* 64]

THE FIGHT FOR OUTER SPACE

Through progress in rocket research Russia may have jumped into the lead in the race to claim the universe

by Martin Caidin
Illustrated by Fred Wolff

A Russian space satellite may be circling the earth *now!*

For years rocket engineers have been predicting the day when an unpiloted, instrument-crammed rocket would be hurled off the earth, to orbit at several hundred miles in space around our planet.

Chances are, however, that this initial epochal conquest of space may not be an American venture . . . that the Russians soon will—*or already have*—sent their satellite into the void.

Americans have been concerned primarily with Russian mastery of atomic and hydrogen bomb warfare; our attention has been diverted from the equally serious matter of rocket and missile science, a sphere of activity in which the Soviet Union may well be leading the United States.

Russia is no latecomer to rockets, since her Professor K. Ziolkowsky established scientific precedents in rocket theory and space flight as far back as the early 1900s. During World War II Russian rocket research continued unabated and, indeed, at the close of the war Soviet legions swooped down upon and captured more than eighty percent of all German rocket experimental, flight testing, and production facilities. This was no minor windfall, for contained in the war booty were the results of world-pioneering rocket activity.

Since the close of World War II the Soviet Union has accelerated its rocket research and development program. The Soviet Central Institute for Guided Missile Development in Moscow is a beehive of constant activity. Marshall Konstantin Vershinin, once in disfavor with the Soviet hierarchy over air power disputes, is today Russia's foremost exponent of missile warfare, and high on the list of the Russian "favored." Russian rocket testing activity has been reported

An unpiloted Soviet spaceship may soon be circling three-hundred miles above the earth.

THE FIGHT FOR OUTER SPACE

from the entire Baltic region, through Germany, across the western half of Russia and, more recently, the Severnaya Zemlya archipelago in the Arctic Ocean has become the scene of extensive missile development.

What we *know* of Russian work has caused high-ranking American military personnel to report in secret testimony to Senate groups that the Russians are making "sensational progress" in missile work. Exactly what is going on in the vast regions of the Gobi Desert or the Kirghiz Steppes, ideal rocket range facilities, is a matter for educated guesswork.

Scientific "guesstimates," however, are producing alarming conclusions. In a conversation I held with Dr. Wernher von Braun, wartime technical director of the V-2 rocket, and today probably the world's leading rocket authority, von Braun told me that the Russians are following a development policy differing from that of the United States, that they are aiming for the immediate construction of rockets considerably superior to the V-2. Furthermore, von Braun stated, their energies have been directed to this goal for many years.

Recently, it was learned that the Russian effort toward this end is paying handsome dividends. They have increased by more than fifty percent the motor thrust of the wartime V-2, and have doubled its wartime range of 200 miles. They have rushed to successful completion a series of anti-bomber rockets, developed tactical and long-range strategic bombardment rockets, and have stressed continually the development of a rocket motor which would permit a range of several thousand miles.

That last program was part of a series of events which provided the tipoff to Russian activity in unmanned spaceships. The new Russian rocket motor, which is creating a sensation among rocket engineers, is described as the "103." Burning liquid oxygen and kerosene, the "103" motor delivers the amazing thrust of 264,000 pounds! It is more than thirteen times as powerful as the motor which powers the record-breaking U. S. Navy Viking rocket!

With the "103" motor as a first-stage booster, the improved V-2 (77,000 lbs. thrust) as the second stage booster, and a smaller third-stage rocket, the Russians can place—*or may already have done so*—an instrument-carrying satellite into space!

The "103" motor represents a tremendous advance in rocket science. It is as great an achievement over the V-2 rocket as was that infamous weapon over the crude affairs of prewar days. It may have given the Russians the key to the conquest of space.

For the last two years Russian newspapers and science magazines have devoted unusual attention to the matter of space flight. Russian scientists and writers have reported to their people that Russia leads the world in rocket activity and space travel research. Early this year the magazine *Komsomolskaya Pravda* carried a feature article by Professor V. V. Dobronrabov, who discussed not only space travel in general, but Russian space satellites in particular.

That this matter receives consideration in the highest quarters of Soviet science was indicated recently by Professor A. N. Nesmeyanov, president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, who publicly discussed Russian potentialities in the matter of launching small spaceships off the earth.

What all this means is that the Russians may have a tremendous lead over the rest of the world in the constantly-expanding science of space travel. Many leading rocket authorities believe that a Russian instrument station may even now be circling the earth at 17,000 miles per hour, sending back from its many instruments vital data to radio and television receiving stations.

And if the Russian rocket is not yet in space, it is only a matter of time—of very little time—before the sun reflects off the steel sides of the first unpiloted Soviet spaceship, two or three hundred miles above the earth.

There is no great secret involved in building the unmanned satellite. More than five years ago, using an obsolete V-2 and an ill-mated WAC-Corporal rocket, American engineers reached speeds of more than 5,000 miles per hour, and established their mark more than 250 miles above the earth's surface. We know how to construct and launch into space an instrument-filled rocket. We do not, however, at this time possess the rocket motor powerful enough to transform the blueprints into reality.

The Russians do. The "103" motor, or a group of such motors, *is* powerful enough to do the job.

The Soviet spaceship would be nothing more than the long-anticipated extension of present knowledge and equipment, borne off the earth on the flaming power of their sensational "103" motor. We can prophesy, and with a high degree of accuracy, what the giant Russian rocket may be like, and what its performance will be.

The three-stage missile will stand about 160 feet tall, with a diameter at the base of about twenty-five to thirty feet. The first, or initial booster stage, will be powered by three "103" motors, generating a combined thrust of nearly 400 tons. Depending upon the performance desired, the second, or intermediate booster stage, will be powered by a single "103" motor, or by an improved V-2 rocket with a motor of 77,000 pounds thrust.

The final stage, which will remain in space, will derive its thrust from either the V-2 motor, or a smaller unit adapted especially for this task. Crammed with instruments, this last stage would become the first scientific outpost in the incredible environment which is the vacuum between the worlds.

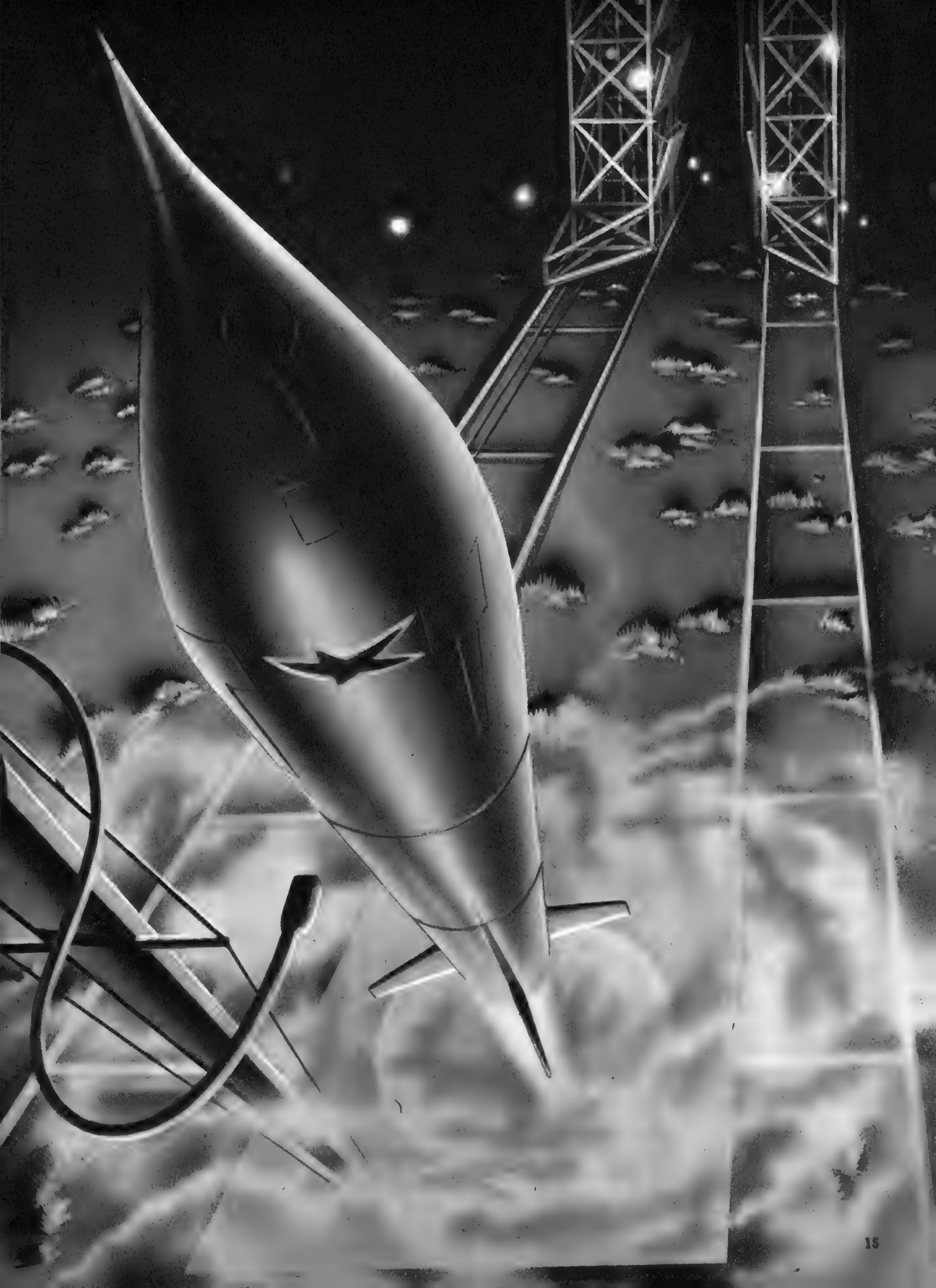
The third stage may be placed into any orbit above the earth which the Russian engineers may desire. At 200 miles beyond the planet, it will whip about this world at 17,200 miles per hour, completing a revolution once every ninety-one minutes, making nearly sixteen round trips each full day. There is a problem with the 200-mile orbit, however, in that even at this tremendous height there are present tenuous traces of the earth's atmosphere. After two or three months of its tremendous speed, even the wisps of atmosphere would serve to reduce the velocity of the satellite. Its speed would then fall, the missile would descend in a steepening curve, finally disappearing in a blinding flash of meteor-like light as friction with the denser air closer to the earth caused flaming disintegration.

Any orbit is possible. At 346 miles beyond the earth, the satellite would revolve at slightly less than 17,000 miles per hour, and would swing once about the planet every ninety-six minutes. This may be the optimum distance from the planet of the Russian space vehicle.

The entire trip from takeoff to orbit would require only about one hour. At takeoff, sirens and bursting flares would clear the area of all personnel. Technicians and electronic probers will triple-check the rocket's connections, for even the failure of a single part can wreck the project. Sixty seconds before launching, the wheels, turbines and fueling equipment within the rocket come to life. Fuel spills from the tanks toward the waiting motors, then races under high pressure as the pumps whine.

At its moment of firing, with flame splashing in a crimson cataract beneath the rocket, the monster hardly moves. It vibrates and quivers from the tremendous thrust of its screaming motors. Thunder so loud as to make the entire body groan in needled agony booms into the air and, before the crashing echo returns, the rocket begins to lift. Ever so slowly, 160 feet of steel and fuel rises majestically, its gyros spinning furiously to [*Continued on page 58*]

Sixty seconds before launching the wheels and turbines within the rocket come to life. The monster vibrates from the thrust of the motors as the take-off begins.



WHITE RENEGADE

Simon Girty got his first lesson in torture when he was very young. His Indian teachers and screaming victims found him an excellent student

by Fred Zimmerman

Illustrated by Ray Johnson

While Simon and his brothers stared in fascination, the Indians put the fire to the fear-crazed woman.

Around the time of the American Revolution there was stationed at Fort Pitt, in Western Pennsylvania, a middle-aged, surly, holy-terror-of-a-scout by the name of Simon Girty, who suddenly burst forth as one of the outstanding comedians of his day.

He didn't write anything, for he was illiterate. And he didn't exactly go on the stage. But the redskins were being particularly messy at the time, and this Girty kept barracks and barroom audiences in stitches with an hilarious routine about the Indians being too chicken-hearted for their own good. Scalping a corpse, he said—and, of course, everyone thought he was kidding—was a worn-out Indian fetish, but scalping a man alive taught the fellow, by God, a lesson. And burning a captive at the stake was just dandy, but slow roasting was ever so much better. "What them savages need," Simon would dead-pan, "is a barstard like me tuh show 'em how tuh fight."

That type of sadistic "humor" made quite a hit with the fun-loving, if fear-crazed, settlers in and around old Pittsburgh Town, and Girty, in spite of his somewhat crumby upbringing, became welcome in the best border homes. But —on the morning of March 29, 1778—when an old scout sauntered into the Fort Pitt officers' mess and announced that *Mister* Girty, during the night, had "gone over" to the Indians, an epidemic of strange insomnia was set off in the Ohio Valley. It was brought on, apparently, by morbid fears of waking up bald.

How well the settlers' fears were justified is shown in

WHITE RENEGADE

Girty's gory record of murder and mayhem during the next 40 years. The shots fired at Lexington and Concord, almost two years before, may have been "heard 'round the world," but they were indistinguishable in the Western wilderness, where fighting was a part of the normal course of living. The American Revolution was slow in coming to the Ohio frontier, and the settlers, who had long been fighting alongside the British against the French and Indians, were slower still in taking sides. Girty himself had once won a lieutenancy (and had been promised captaincy) in the British Army, and thus had sworn allegiance to the English King.

But with the formal declaration of war with Britain, scores of colonists, including Girty, lost their commissions. It could be, as some say, that bitterness over the loss of his hard-won commission turned him into a professional hell-raiser. But the plain and simple truth is that Simon, in all due despects, was a 14-carat bastard—a drunkard, a murderer, a torturer, and a traitor, and seldom, if ever, pretended to be anything else.

Indicative of his reputation, he did not, as was said of him, invent the torture of heaping hot coals onto the scalpless skull of a dying victim. But the business of shoving a flaming faggot into the rectum of a screaming captive is almost typically Girtian.

Soon after the beginning of the War, he was convicted in absentia, of treason, and spent the last three decades of his long life with an $800 price on his head, which, ironically enough, was also the amount offered by the government at the same time to the Cherokee Indians for the whole state of North Carolina! And he died a blind alcoholic and was buried, of necessity, on foreign soil. Although, truthfully, he was accorded the full military rites of a respected British pensioner.

Simon Girty was born—if such hellions are so delivered—in 1741, a few miles up the Susquehanna from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. He received his baptism of violence at the age of nine. It happened on a dismal, rainy afternoon when his father, a no-good drunk, got into a drinking bout with a "tame" Indian bearing the improbable name of "The Fish." As darkness approached, nocturnally and alcoholicly, The Fish became "peeved about something" and with a stone tomahawk bashed out the elder Girty's brains. Little Simon cringed in a corner and saw all.

It was no happenstance that there also was present at this bloodspill an ill-fated man by the name of Mr. Turner, who was openly carrying on an affair with Mrs. Girty. Being one for heroics, Mr. Turner grabbed a rifle from somewhere and killed The Fish. For this act, "above and beyond the call of duty," he became, in an indecently short time, young Simon's stepfather, and a marked man among the neighboring "wild" Indians.

Things were comparatively peaceful until 1755. The French, closely allied with the Indians, were in charge of Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh), but they were held in check by the threat of a strong British and colonial army which was being formed in Virginia under General Edward Braddock. But in July of that year, when Braddock stupidly marched his army into an ambuscade, on the banks of the Monongahela, things went to hell in a hurry.

The Turners and the Girty boys were captured during a bloody raid and taken to the Seneca village of Kittanning, where Mr. Turner was promptly sentenced to burn. Simon, with his brothers James and George, sat on a log beside their mother—who was holding in her lap their half-brother, John—and got their first real lesson in the technique of torture.

The proceedings began early in the morning. It turned out to be a slow-roasting affair, lasting until late in the afternoon. The Indians finally heated rifle barrels and applied them to the tortured, conscious man, until at last he was dead.

A few days later, a partially successful attempt by the whites to rescue the prisoners so riled up the redmen that an English woman, who had attempted to escape during the skirmish, also was sentenced to burn to death. This time Simon and his two brothers sat, trusted and unfettered prisoners, and watched the whole proceedings.

The woman was staked to the ground and burning sticks were laid across her naked body. When finally she lost consciousness, she was cut in half and tossed to the dogs. Simon watched, fascinated, while a French soldier drew his scalp knife, cut off a slab of the human flesh, and stood thoughtfully munching it. The French, he ever-afterward contended, were the only white people on earth who understood Indian thinking.

And the next day, Simon's initiation was completed. Another white man was burned at the stake. After the torturing had been going on for about three hours, the sky became overcast with heavy, black clouds. The Indians, not to be cheated by rain, forced a ladle of hot lead down the man's throat.

Shortly afterwards, the Senecas, who formed the majority of the Indians present, adopted Simon. He was turned over to the squaws, who stripped him naked and scrubbed him thoroughly with sand and rough bark—to get rid of the white blood—and for three years he lived with them, first as captive, then as a bosom friend. Eagerly, and with evidence of positive genius, he learned the Seneca language, in all six dialects—just as his brother Jim, who was taken by the Shawnee, and George, who was claimed by the Delawares, quickly learned the languages of their tribes.

In 1759, after General Forbes had retaken Fort Duquesne and renamed it Fort Pitt, a peace treaty was arranged which caused the Girty family, along with scores of other white prisoners, to be brought to the Fort and set free. For most it was an occasion for rejoicing, backslapping, and the frantic exchanging of news. But not for the Girty boys. They threw a drunk, the likes of which probably was not seen again in Pittsburgh Town until the Pirates took a pennant.

Mother Girty, herself no stranger to the jug, was proud of her brood. For, along with their brawling, knifings and shootings—made more terrifying by their bloodcurdling Indian jabberwocky—they also won considerable disrepute for their participation in a locally popular sport known as "long-shot." This highly competitive game was played in the crooked streets of the town, and consisted simply of two men, or two teams, all presumably "likkered-up" and armed with loaded flintlocks, taking potshots at one another. The idea was not to kill—simply to cripple, or more hilarious still, to emasculate.

Those were the days of big land grabs, and social standings were often rated in acreages. So Girty, being the best Indian linguist on the border, and being on friendly terms with most of the tribes, was a good man to know. He soon found himself being lionized by the aristocracy. They even invited him into their homes—if he was sober. He was utterly amazed to find that the old patriarchs themselves suddenly began considering him a wonderful conversationalist. They were forever getting him off somewhere in a corner and having him identify landmarks on wilderness maps, and egging him into putting in a good word for them to one chief or another.

In this mad social whirl Simon soon discovered certain embarrassing deficiencies in himself. First of all, brandy had a way of turning him into a sure-enough Indian, and in such a state he had a tendency to want to maim people. For this, he spent considerable time doing short jail hitches, charged with "misdemeanors"—which meant simply that the victims had lived. And, secondly, in spite of his linguistic genius, the intricacies of reading and writing, even his own name, completely eluded him. This shortcoming was comparable at the time with not knowing canasta today, and caused him to become very sensitive.

But by far Girty's biggest handicap, particularly with

the punch bowl set, was his appearance. He looked like hell. His face was round, broad and flat, and his forehead was about the same width as the margin of this page. He wore his coarse black hair in a manner that can be described only as "shaggy" (he cut it himself with a scalp knife), and when he was scowling, which was usually, his hair and eyelashes met, obliterating his forehead almost completely. But he did have brilliantly white and even teeth, and a ready, if overly boisterous, laugh. And he stood five-nine, barefoot, and had a massive chest and a tremendous bull neck.

Popularity is heady stuff, particularly for a man like Girty. He was overly conscious of the fact that in all the generations of Girtys he had ever heard of, none had ever risen to the dizzy heights of social acceptance he now seemed to have achieved. How far, he wondered, could he go if he were really to apply himself.

First of all, he wanted a commission. He wasn't entirely dumb to the fact that he was being used as a sort of walking encylopedia. But he didn't care. So for ten years he devoted his well-nigh inexhaustible energies to the well-nigh impossible task of breaking through the military crust of Fort Pitt. His efforts were downright pitiful. He chose as his favorite device the classically bonehead tactic of volunteering for nasty details, which, as any soldier knows, is a fatal procedure.

Nothing was too menial, nor too dangerous, for him to volunteer for. He would spend weeks alone on some particularly suicidal scouting trip—or in nursemaiding some son of a gouty old squire through the savage-infested wilderness—and return to find that his labors were classified merely as routine. And, always, a fantastic sort of luck seemed to keep pace with him: while other scouts occasionally failed to return, or staggered in without their hair, nothing seemed ever to happen to Girty. This, in time, caused considerable head-wagging, and probably as much as anything else held up his long-promised lieutenancy.

At last, in 1774, his big break came.

Although the Mingoes were officially at peace, a group of hardy pioneers, in the company of a whiskey-selling Indian trader, one fine evening set upon and murdered to the last baby the family of Chief John Logan. The great Logan was away from home at the time, but when he returned he went into a blood-spill that would have done credit to the later Geronimo. In one night raid he took thirteen scalps singlehanded.

Chief Cornstalk, the great sachem of the Shawnees, sided in with Logan, and pleaded with his warriors to murder their squaws and children and come with him to fight to the last man. But General Lewis defeated Cornstalk at Point Pleasant, and Lord Dunmore, Governor of Virginia, personally called a peace council on the upper Muskingum. There was but one little wrinkle to be ironed out; peace was wonderful, but Chief Logan wasn't having any. In fact, due to pressing personal business—some of the pioneer soldiers had come off to war leaving their cabins unprotected—Logan wasn't even coming to the party.

Dunmore called for the best scout on the border. And that, in a word, was Girty. Simon only recently had distinguished himself by crawling through the big middle of Cornstalk's army to deliver a message to General Lewis. Already there were rumors that he would be commissioned. He was a proud scout when he reported to the governor's tent.

Dunmore glowered at him. Girty shifted uneasily. To impress the savages, Dunmore had diked himself out in his most resplendent dress uniform. Girty was worn to a frazzle, and his buckskins hung in dirty, shaggy ribbons from his chest and waist. He knew that he looked more Indian than white. Did the governor even know his race?

But Dunmore neither knew nor cared. "Do you know where the Mingoes are!" he bellowed.

Girty nodded.

"I want you to go get Chief Logan and bring him here."

It was a little like Eisenhower ordering a sergeant to bring in Malenkov.

Girty's heart sank. A reasonably dangerous assignment he would have welcomed, if just to bring himself more favorably to the governor's attention. But to bring in John Logan! What had he done to deserve such a suicidal assignment? What did they have against him? His acute sensitivity, born of his crude upbringing, his frightening appearance, and his hated illiteracy, sprang up. He stiffened with indignation. But the lieutenant touched his shoulder, and he took the hint and stepped back. Lowly scouts didn't even salute. He turned after a couple of steps and walked away.

Half a hundred idle soldiers watched in awe as he prepared for his suicidal junket. He changed the priming in his rifle, slid into new moccasins, and tied a scarlet scarf around his shaggy hair. The scarf was to become his trade mark.

Only Simon Kenton, a fellow scout, and a regular Galahad of a woodsman, dared approach him. Kenton was presently going under the name of Butler, because he thought he was wanted for murder in Virginia for stomping out a man's brains. He was a tall horse-of-a-man, with a thick mop of auburn hair, and so physically powerful that he couldn't imagine anyone being foolish enough to cross him when he was angry.

"Wouldn't mind a-tall trailin' along with yuh, Girty," Kenton said softly.

But there was the faintest trace of pity in young Kenton's voice, and Girty, catching it, glanced at him and shook his head.

"Logan might be a lettle touchy on the subject o' comin' here," the Virginian drawled persistently.

Girty grinned. That damned Kenton could make a dog laugh.

He set out across the clearing, and stopped at the edge of the forest, where the last sentinel was posted, and stood murmuring to himself. He turned and looked back at Dunmore's camp. It looked so insecure. For a moment he planned how he would attack it if he were leading—say, a pack of howling Indians. In his mind he easily took the camp. As he turned he wondered again if they were really trying to get rid of him. If he could only be sure!

Deep in the forest, he became as primitive as any warrior on the border. Knowing his need for strength, he secreted his rifle in a hollow tree, and lit out at an easy, trail-eating jog. He was not the fastest runner about, but for the thing called "trail-guts" he had no equal.

Early next morning, he skirted the first of the Mingo villages, and coming to Logan's Town, he did not hesitate to walk straight into view. A squaw arose from her morning toilet and screamed the alarm, but he waved her disdainfully aside and strode on. Two braves stepped in front of him, brandishing tomahawks; he paused, then aloofly told them that he had come to see Logan.

Logan came from his cabin and stood, majestically, with folded arms. He was the most brilliant of the border Indians. Girty spoke in Mingo, impassively explaining his mission. And when Logan replied, he in turn spoke proudly in the white man's English. After the palaver was finished, Girty turned and walked back the way he had come. Inside the forest, he pondered for a moment his decision not to attempt to take Logan, but merely to talk with him. He knew that, subconsciously, he had chosen the redman's way.

It was noon the next day when he stood, swaying, before Dunmore's tent. With half-closed eyes, he repeated word-for-word the answer of Chief Logan. Dunmore was stunned by the speech. He called for Captain John Gibson to bring paper and ink. They went inside the tent, and, while Gibson wrote, Girty once more repeated the words that were to go down in history as Logan's speech. For two whole days he had held trapped [*Continued on page* 59]

AL ROSEN SAYS:
WE'LL GO ALL THE WAY!

The inside story behind Cleveland's surge toward the pennant—and the man who makes the Indians move

by Al Hirshberg

The Cleveland Indians are a baseball team that has made a career out of finishing second. Like all the other clubs in the American League, they have been dominated by the mighty New York Yankees, who have already won five straight pennants. For the past three of those five years, the Indians have been bridesmaids—with a ball club that many experts picked to win.

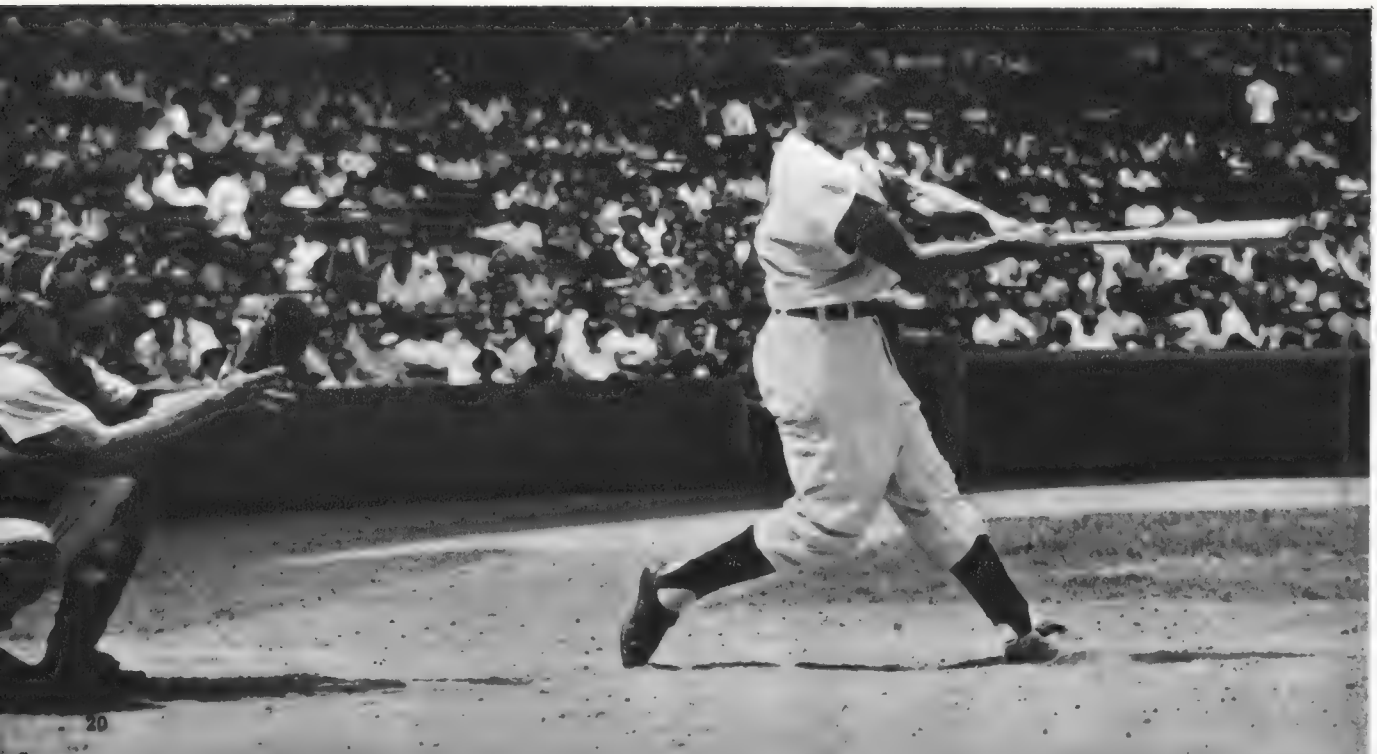
The mystery of the Indians' consistent failures is intensified by the fact that their pitching has been the best in the league ever since Manager Al Lopez took them over in 1951. That year, they had three 20-game winners—Bob Feller, Mike Garcia and Early Wynn. A fourth hurler, Bob Lemon, won 17. A year later, they not only had three 20-game winners again—this time, Lemon, Garcia and Wynn—but they won practically everything else except the pennant. Larry Doby and Luke Easter were the home run leaders, Rosen led the parade in runs-batted-in and Dale Mitchell was second in batting. Still, the Indians finished second.

This year they're going to finish first. The authority for this definite statement is a guy who'll do a lot to make the prediction come true—Al Rosen, the Indians' "meal ticket." In the past three years—during the period when the experts figured the Indians would snap the Yanks' monopoly on pennants—Rosen had a few private doubts of his own about Cleveland's chances. He has none whatever now.

"We've got a solid, well-balanced ball club," he says. "We've always had pitching and good power. But now we've got fine defensive strength, and the best bench in my time, and we haven't lost either the pitching or the power.

While many observers think that the acquisition of Dave Philley, as well as the success of the early season switch of Rosen to first base have been the principal factors in the

Al's terrific power won him the home run and runs-batted-in titles in '53. He lost the batting title on last day of season.



Third base or first base? It makes little difference to Al Rosen who has proved that he can star in both positions.

Indians' success, Rosen himself hands a heavy share of the credit on the comparatively-unknown Al Smith.

"He made a switch this year, too, and it worked," Rosen explains. "He came up as a third baseman. Al Lopez made an outfielder out of him. He's been terrific."

The Cleveland bench strength, as Rosen sees it, revolves around his roommate, Wally Westlake, Dale Mitchell and Vic Wertz. "We've got the heaviest hitting collection of pinch-hitters in the business now," says Rosen. "That's more than we've had in those other years. People were pointing at us and saying that we didn't have courage or the will to win. All the courage and will to win in the world won't get you anywhere if you don't have the horses, and all our horses were on the field. We had very little on the bench."

But, in giving the reasons for feeling the Indians will win, Rosen leaves out the most important one—himself. The gap is filled by his teammates. "Where would we be without Rosen?" Jim Hegan remarked, in answer to a question recently. "We'd be out in left field somewhere. When you dope out a club like ours, you start with the big guy, if you're lucky enough to have one. Ours is Rosen. For my money, he's the best ballplayer in the business, and if we win the pennant, it will be because of him."

Manager Lopez, a man who has been on a ticklish spot ever since he took over the job of running the Indians in the winter of 1950, makes no bones about Rosen's value.

"No sense kidding myself," he said. "I can sit and try to make like a general from here until doomsday, but all the plans in the world go out the window if anything happens to Rosen. When a manager is lucky enough to have a ballplayer like Al, he builds his club around that ballplayer. Without him, we'd be dead."

For proof Lopez pointed out how Rosen had willingly switched to first base at the start of the '54 season. Lopez never would have shifted him from third, if Al hadn't agreed to the move—even if a refusal meant keeping training camp sensation Rudy Regalado on the bench.

"All he had to say to me was 'no,'" the Cleveland manager says, "and that would have been that. I really did expect that he'd want some time to think it over, but he didn't even insist on that." [*Continued on page* 56]

HOUDINI

by James Joseph

With the first light of dawn, Bill Eastman, Jr. slipped into the timbered wilderness of Washington's rugged Cascades. As always, he was alone.

With calculated aforethought, Eastman had chosen daybreak for his plunge into the evergreened-vastness of Douglas fir, spruce and hemlock.

But first, he'd made certain that no inquisitive eyes were watching as he swerved his car off the mud-rutted logging road and parked out of sight in a stand of low-hanging spruce. He'd been careful to pick a spot firm enough to conceal his tire-treads. Then, hidden from the road, he shut off the motor and sat there awhile—just listening.

Presently satisfied that he was alone and unobserved, Eastman got down to the business for which he'd come. He pulled on his heavy caulk boots and slipped into his canvas, sap-splattered cruise jacket. Usually, he carried the jacket rolled up in the car, because when he wore it, he became a marked man.

He rummaged through its pockets, reassuring himself that his surveyor's compass, his slope-calculating abney and his waterproof tally cards were in order. Meditatively he ran a calloused forefinger along the razor-sharp blade of his machete. Then, deliberately, he sheathed it in the scabbard hung at his side. When all was in readiness, he shouldered a packsack that contained 20-days' rations, and adjusted the

Eastman starts out on a timber cruise in Washington state carrying machete, diameter stick, maps, compass.

With an increment bore Eastman drills into the center of the tree to count the growth rings indicating age.

of the FORESTS

Every year lumber operators stake millions of dollars on the skill and courage of timber cruisers like Bill Eastman

straps. Then he disappeared into the vast solitude of Douglas fir and dank, decaying vegetation.

When the lattice-work of fir branches sprang shut behind him, Bill Eastman was alone and strictly on his own.

During the past 20 years, many of his solitary forays into the silent world of trees have begun like this. For, like fellow timber cruisers—that hardy handful of free-lance foresters whose job it is to locate fabulous treasures of loggable trees for timber companies—Bill Eastman often has to conceal his urgent business.

Timber outfits unhesitantly pay him as much as $150 a day—a top wood's salary—to locate timber and to evaluate it. And part of that pay is a bonus for keeping his mouth shut and his comings-and-goings secret.

As you might imagine, the regularity with which they drop from sight and their habitually clandestine ways, have cloaked timber cruisers in an aura of mystery. Cruisers consider this reputation for aloofness highly advantageous. When someone begins prying into their affairs, they need only say, "Look, fellow, I'm a cruiser." The conversation stops right there. Thus, although most cruisers deny it, they have purposefully encouraged the impression. Yet there is no denying that occupationally, timber cruisers are characteristically cut from the same cloth; they are reticent, self-reliant, iron-willed, fearless.

Bill Eastman, for example, has nearly half his 40-odd years in the woods. He's tracked the rainforests of Central America; outguessed grizzlies in British Columbia, and roamed for days through the Cascades. And his flint-grey eyes, set firmly into a wind-burnt face, have evaluated more timber than probably any free-lance cruiser actively engaged in the business today. Behind those eyes is a brain sharpened by experience to the ways of the woods, and highly schooled at the University of Washington and at the Yale School of Forestry, from which he holds a Masters degree.

Yet Eastman shrugs off any suggestion that his byways are either clandestine or deliberately planned that way.

"Maybe it's habit. But I don't knowingly sidle into a woods. I walk in just like anybody else. People are always getting the wrong idea."

Granted, many of Eastman's jobs—like those of other free-lance cruisers—are pretty cut-and-dried. Still, enough of them linger under the "confidential" category to shade him in mystery.

But it's also true that moppets on logging town streets have been known to tug at their mothers' coats and exclaim, "Look mama, there goes a cruiser!!"

For a cruiser's work uniform—his canvas jacket, Levi's, caulk boots, scabbarded machete [*Continued on page* 46]

Timber cruiser Eastman who has been estimating value of forests for over 20 years measures girth of tree.

Sighting through his compass Eastman maps forest to determine exact location of timber for future logging.

PADDY the FIXER

Because he could paint a horse so skillfully its own mother wouldn't recognize it, he was able to pull one of the biggest fixes in the history of horse racing

by Alan Hynd

Illustrated by Dom Lupo

Bleaching a star on Kalakaua's face was simple for Paddy. Next he changed the horse from light bay to dark brown.

When, recently, the high brass of Pinkerton's National Detective Agency, which protects the big horse race tracks in the United States against the artful rascals who rig up crooked races, read dispatches coming out of England about a hopped-up ringer in Bath that had breezed home at 10 to 1, they were reminded of Peter Christian Barrie. For Paddy Barrie, a cunning little Irishman, was, on no less an authority than the Pinkertons, the greatest fixer in the history of crooked racing. Way back in 1931, Paddy disguised a thoroughbred to look like a plug, shot it full of dope and slipped it into the first race at Havre de Grace, Maryland, for a killing generally supposed to have been in the neighborhood of a million dollars—by all odds the most remunerative fixed race in American tracks annals.

When Paddy Barrie was operating here a quarter of a century ago the protective system at the tracks was full of holes and Paddy was just the boy to slip through them. At many tracks a horse was identified just before a race simply because a former owner, trainer, judge, groom, or practically anybody else stepped up and said he knew the animal.

But slipping through the protective system was just the beginning for Paddy. He took up where other fixers left off.

PADDY the FIXER

Many fixed races, he noticed, were detected immediately after the ringer romped home in front because the ringer, when more thoroughly examined by suspicious track officials, was found not to fit the physical dimensions of the horse he was impersonating. Or, if the ringer did fit the physical dimensions, it was doctored up by such poor dye that the stuff rubbed off on a damp towel. Paddy Barrie, however, never rung a horse that did not have the same general physical dimensions as the one it was impersonating. Studying chemistry, he experimented until he found dyes that would not run when subjected to ordinary heat and water tests.

And then, to make assurance doubly sure, Paddy originated a dodge that was so simple that nobody had ever thought of it before. Realizing that nobody paid any attention to horses that were always being exercised around the stables at tracks, Paddy simply walked the real horse into the ringer's stall after the ringer had won a race, threw some soapy water over it to give it the appearance of sweating from its victory, and led the ringer to a van and had it driven off the track grounds.

Today, largely because Paddy Barrie's activities forced them to extend themselves, the Pinkertons have come up with a horse identification system which they claim is as distinctive as fingerprints. The Pinks discovered that every horse has a "chestnut"—a rough protrusion of hardened skin—on the inner side of each leg, which has ridges and depressions as distinctive as a fingerprint. So what they do is photograph the four chestnuts of every horse when it starts its track career and, later, just before each race the animal runs at a track under Pinkerton protection, compare its chestnuts with those in the photograph. So Paddy, without meaning to, has made a sort of a left-handed contribution to the sport of kings.

Paddy Barrie, a black Irishman who was drug up in the slums of London, was a quick-moving, trigger-brained character, only five feet, one inch tall. He had a round, boyishly innocent face, the gift of gab and dripped with Hibernian charm.

The very first job Paddy ever had was with horses. Employed as a stable boy on an estate just outside London when he was only twelve, Paddy found that he had a way with horses, an instinct for the beasts. When he stroked a horse and talked softly to it the horse did almost everything but answer back.

By the time he was sixteen, Paddy was working around the English tracks. Being quick on the uptake, and a kid who knew how to keep silent in several languages, he was in the confidence of the sharpers and was hep to much of the skulduggery that went on around him. He observed several drug-store races, according to a confession he was one day to make to the Pinkertons. Once he followed a ringing, step by step, witnessing a white thoroughbred being fixed up to look like a brown plug, then seeing it romp home at big odds—a job that he was never to forget.

At twenty-one, Paddy was a jockey—and a good one. He booted home more than his share of winners at most of the important tracks in England and Ireland and was living high off the hog. By now he had developed quite a taste for women and liquor and was quite a handy fellow with both. He lived in a handsome flat in London—a far cry from his boyhood in the slums.

Twenty-six years old when the first World War broke out in 1914, Paddy was drafted into the English Army. He suffered shrapnel wounds in the Battle of Belleau Wood and was hospitalized for eight months. Thirty-one when he got out of the Army in 1919, Paddy discovered that his wounds made it impossible ever to ride again. He couldn't find a job at anything else. Abhorring the thought of winding up back in the slums, he was in a real spot.

Since horses were the only thing Paddy knew, he became a track hangeron, on the look-out for practically anything that would pay off. He met up with a couple of sharpies who had come into possession of two horses of the same sex, age and general physical dimensions and who had a ringing in mind. One of the horses, a goat, was black, and the other, a fast stepper, was dark brown. Knowing that Paddy had had considerable experience with horses, the pair told him that if he could dye the good horse the same color as the plug they would cut him in on the killing.

Jumping at the chance, Paddy simply went out and bought some dyes and bleaches and fixed up the fast brown horse so that it looked pretty much like the slow black plug. The ringer won the race but it began to sweat afterward and the dye ran and the pay-off was held up. Scotland Yard, called in to find out who had pulled the job, caught Paddy and the other two conspirators. Since ringing was a criminal offense in England the trio drew five years in Dartmoor.

Edgar Wallace, the noted mystery-story writer, who was also a great horse-race fan, had been intrigued by newspaper accounts of the ringing. So Wallace visited Barrie in Dartmoor and got his life story. Then, one week-end, the incredibly prolific Wallace dashed off a race-track novel called *The Ringer*, in which the central figure was the prototype of Barrie. The novel was published in 1926—the year that Paddy, then thirty-eight years old, was sprung from Dartmoor.

As a result of the Wallace novel, and his criminal record, Barrie was *persona non grata* not only at every race track in England but practically everywhere else where he might have latched onto gainful employment. He called on Wallace, who was cleaning up on the book about him, with the thought of getting a little of the gravy, but Wallace was too busy to see him.

Convinced that life had given him a raw deal, the embittered Paddy decided to get out of England. He shipped to Canada. Unable to get off the ground there, Paddy came to the U. S. A., entering the country illegally by slipping across the border. That was in 1927, when he was thirty-nine.

Paddy wandered into the stables of Harry Sinclair, the oil magnate, at Rancocas, New Jersey, turned on the Hibernian charm and was taken on as a rubber by Sam Hildreth, Sinclair's trainer. He began to travel around the country with Sinclair horses.

After two years with Sinclair, Paddy decided there didn't seem to be much of a future in racing for him—honest racing, that is. The jockeys seemed to be getting all the gravy, wearing the flashiest clothes, staying at good hotels, and grabbing off the prettiest chicks. Paddy, once used to Bond Street tailoring, champagne and caviar, was walking around in mail-order clothes, eating in greasy spoons, consorting with tramps, and sleeping in flea bags.

It was now that the little man decided to seize the one opportunity that seemed to present itself—ringing. Paddy had learned, by keeping an ear constantly cocked, that there was nobody in this country who had really mastered

The race over, Paddy hustled the ringer into a van and

the art. Although ringings were commonplace here they were, in most instances, clumsy jobs easily detected either before or after a race. Back in the Twenties ringing, per se, wasn't a crime in the United States, as it is today. Technically, a man who rung a horse could be charged with fraud but the sharpies paid little attention to *that*. If a ringing was discovered they just lit out for the nearest State line and laid low until things blew over.

Some ringings, Paddy discovered, had failed because, as in the case of the job that had sent him to Dartmoor, the dyes on the ringer had run. Some ringers were spotted because they were obviously a year older or a year younger than they were represented as being. Other ringings were plain clumsy in that the ringers' physical dimensions didn't bear even a close resemblance to the horses they were impersonating. There were, Paddy also knew, instances of ringers being detected because they didn't hold their tails high enough. It all added up, as Paddy saw it, to an opening for him to step in, tie all the loose ends together, and clean up.

Paddy, a thorough fellow, compiled dossiers on more than a thousand horses—their performance records, their physical dimensions, their coloring, their eccentricities, and their probable worth. Then he rented a broken-down stable outside of Minneapolis for peanuts and purchased, for more peanuts, three plugs—a black one, a brown one and a white one—several books on chemistry and a stock of the finest German dyes and bleaches.

Working with the dedication of the true scientist, and ever mindful of his disastrous failure in England, Paddy was soon able to bleach and color the horses so that they stood up under heat, sweat and water tests. The chemicals deformed Paddy's fingernails. Being fastidious, he took to wearing gloves to cover the deformities.

Paddy discovered that he could make a horse hold its tail higher by inserting a pinch of ginger just under the tail. The ginger produced an irritation. These were simple feats, easily and safely accomplished, but, added to a dye or a bleach job, would be as deceiving as all hell at a track where vigilance wasn't severe. A horse's teeth wore with age, and stained, too, but Paddy knew that judges in those days seldom examined a horse's teeth. Nevertheless, he found it a simple task to stain or bleach a horse's teeth, the nearer to approach true perfection in a ringing.

After satisfying himself that he could fix up a horse so that its own mother would have to give it a double take before recognizing it, Paddy began to experiment with doping horses. Like men who have varying capacities for liquor, horses, Paddy discovered, had varying capacities for dope. Some of them reacted quickly—within five to fifteen minutes—to a comparatively mild shot of a combination of glycerine, heroin, strychnine and cola nut; others needed more massive shots and it took as long as half an hour for the stuff to really take effect. Paddy enlisted the aid of a crooked jockey friend in his experiments with dope. The jockey would run the horses and Paddy would clock 'em. Through trial and error, Paddy came to the conclusion that he could clip anywhere from two to three seconds from a ringer's track time.

Paddy was ready to go, in 1930, three years after he had slipped into this country—but he needed an outlet for his talents. His thoughts naturally turned to Al Capone's mob. Paddy, from dope he had picked up while working for Sinclair, knew that Capone was mixed up in crooked stuff at the tracks. Several of the Big Boy's horses, running under the colors of apparently respectable stables, were appearing throughout the country.

Paddy went to Chicago and contacted a character who had connections with the Capone mob. He dropped the word that he had something new to offer in the field of fixed races—doped horses painted so that their own mothers wouldn't recognize them.

Sure enough, the go-between fixed up an appointment for Paddy with a nasty-looking character called Tony, who was a representative for Capone in assorted matters. Paddy explained to Tony how he could paint and dope horses and suggested that the Capone mob avail itself of his talents and give him 10 percent of the take. Tony wanted proof of Paddy's claim that he could produce an undetectable ringing. "All right," said Paddy. "If you'll gamble to the extent of buying two horses I have in mind I'll convince you."

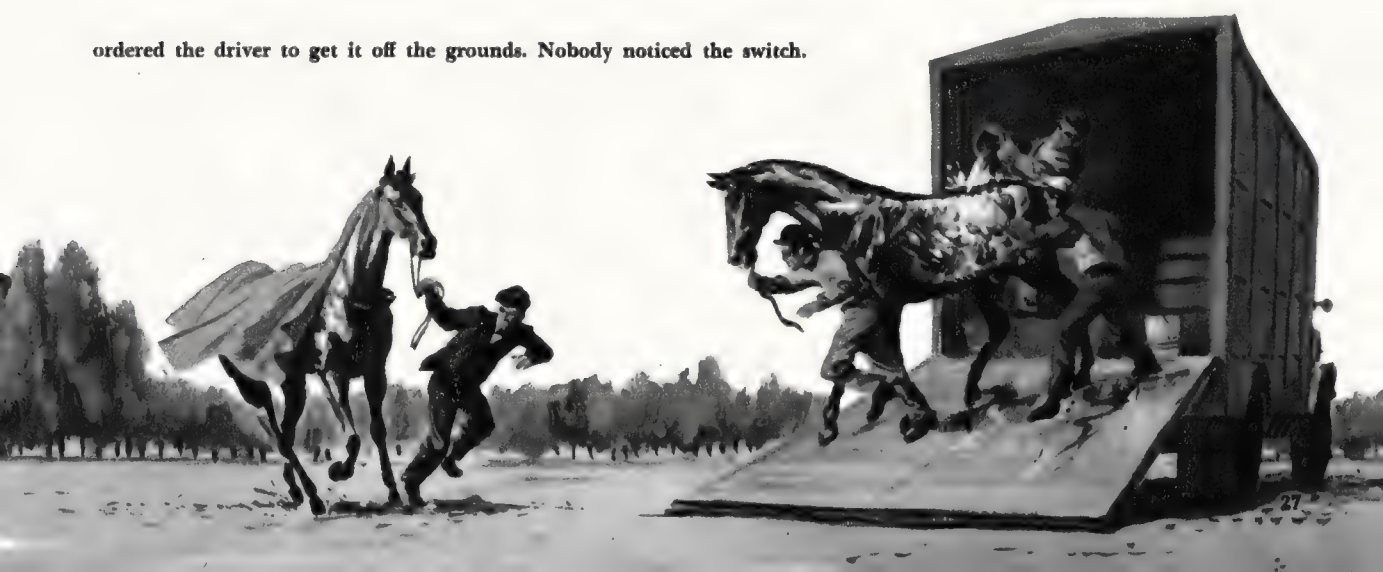
The horses Paddy had in mind were a fast-stepper named Kalakaua, a light bay that had done a mile in a minute and thirty-six seconds at Tiajuana, and Bobby, a dark brown nag with a white foreleg and a white star on its forehead. Kalakaua was owned by Doctor T. J. Ogle, a Chicago physician while Bobby the nag was out to pasture on a farm near Springfield, Illinois.

Through respectable-looking intermediaries, the Capones picked up Kalakaua from the Chicago physician for three thousand dollars and got Bobby, the plug, for peanuts. Then Capone himself and several of the boys went up to Minneapolis to witness Paddy at work.

First thing Paddy did was place a piece of cardboard, with a star cut in it, over Kalakaua's forehead. Then he applied a bleach to the hair under the cut-out. When he removed the cardboard Kalakaua had a star just like Bobby. "I'll be damned," said Capone.

Applying a bleach to Kalakaua's foreleg was quick and simple work for Paddy. Next he brought out the paint brush and started changing Kalakaua from a light bay to a dark brown. Paddy worked swiftly and deftly, so that the gangsters got the impression of a minor miracle being performed right before their eyes. [*Continued on page* 43]

ordered the driver to get it off the grounds. Nobody noticed the switch.

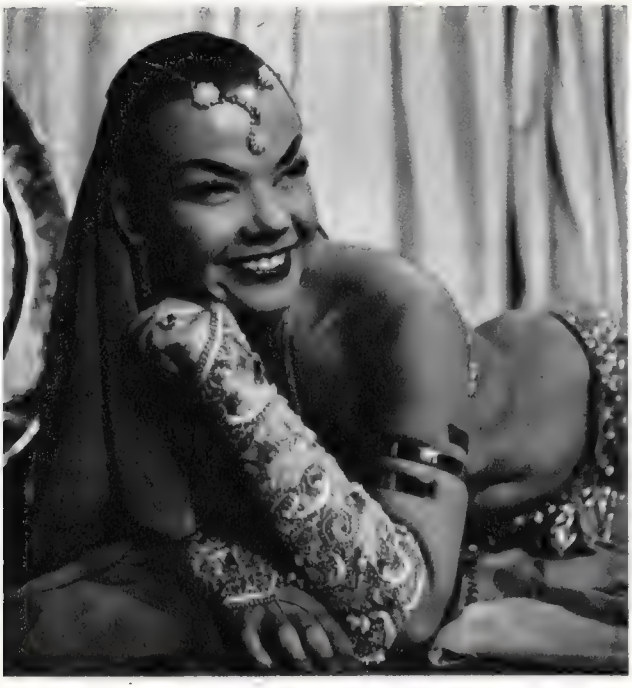


While very young, Nejla taught herself the art of Oriental dancing in front of a mirror. Now she's a perfectionist.

Every one of her dancing movements has a special meaning, but the American censors who saw her didn't quite get them.

TOO HOT for Hollywood

A little while back some of the stockholders of RKO Radio Pictures were running around accusing bossman Howard Hughes of signing luscious babes to lucrative movie contracts and then forgetting to put them into pictures. Naturally poor rich Howard was upset by all this and said it was a big lie and immediately went about the business of signing a lovely that would really show 'em. The lovely was Nejla Ates from Istanbul, Turkey, and, brother, did she show 'em. In fact she showed 'em so much in a picture called Son of Sinbad that the censors hopped in with their shears at the ready and cut Nejla off without a scene. While the temporarily-discouraged Hughes was still muttering that a guy can't win, another movie pioneer name of Jack Warner signed the Turkish Delight for his new epic, the Talisman. Naturally the celluloid started to smoke when Nejla got going, so the censors came running again. As of this writing, the wrangling over the wriggling is still going strong. And Nejla, the center of it all, doesn't give it mind room. She is currently too busy planning marriage to a member of a musicomedy team called The Goofers. All we can say is take another look, chum. Anyone who weds this gal ain't goofin'. •



Nejla's charms won Texas playboy Shephard King III from another belly-dancer, Samai Gamal. Then King lost out.

22-year-old Nejla's last name means "fire" in Turkish. She is barely five feet tall, but that doesn't hurt her appeal.

Soup Up YOUR CAR With H_2O

By injecting a water mixture into the intake manifold of the engine you can give the old bus miraculous new pep and power

By Roger Huntington

Car (right) with water-injection mechanism attached zooms

Can you burn water?

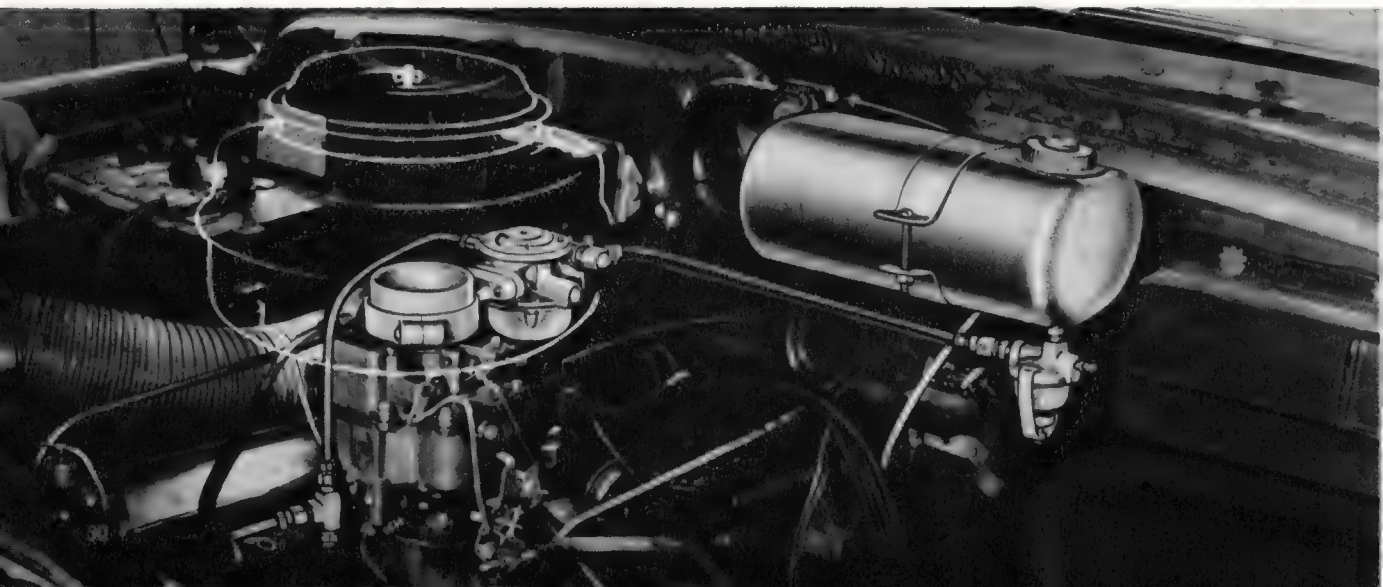
If you can, every scientist from Archimedes on down was a piker. No, you *can't* burn water. And yet more than one World War II fighter pilot is alive today because his engine was rigged so he could squirt water into the cylinders when he needed an extra burst of power to get out of a tight spot! Today this gimmick is at work on highways across the country in trucks, buses, and cars, getting performance out of cheap, low-octane pump gas that used to be reserved for airplanes and racing cars on special fuels in the 100-octane range.

It's a neat trick. By just squirting the proper amount of water, or a water-alcohol mixture, into the intake manifold of an automobile engine, you can get an added punch of knock-free power on regular gas—and if you adjust your engine to take full advantage of the deal, you can carry compression pressures and spark timings that would have the best Detroit designs pinging like an ashcan full of marbles. The result will be improved acceleration and better gas mileage at cruising speeds. That's what this "water injection" business can mean to John Q. Motorist.

So what's the deal? How does it work?

It's all a matter of heat balance. Heat can be a friend or a foe in an automobile engine. The temperature of the cylinder walls, for instance, is very critical. If they run below 140° F. they'll wear fast from corrosion; if they run hotter than around 190° the engine will pump oil and knock at full throttle. We've got a similar situation with the gasoline-

Drawing of Thompson Vitameter shows the gravity-feed tank, filter, collar mounted injector unit and lines.



ahead of car without the attachment. Acceleration can be boosted an average of 18% through this inexpensive method.

air mixture going into the cylinders. If the mixture is too cool the liquid gasoline won't vaporize and you'll get weak and some flooded cylinders, poor performance, and sluggish throttle response; if it's too hot you run into that knock again. Detroit has put an automatic thermostat-controlled heating system on your intake manifold to take care of this . . . but, as is so often the case, it's only a compromise solution to the problem.

This is where water injection—or "anti-detonant" injection, as the engineers call it—comes in. It corrects this poor temperature balance of the fuel-air mixture. To understand just how it does this, we're going to have to dabble in high physics a second. Please bear with us:

In the first place, "knock" (or detonation) in the cylinders is caused when the fuel mixture *explodes* suddenly from its own internal heat, instead of *burning evenly* in a flame front spreading away from the spark plug. This explosion develops terrific pressure waves in the cylinder which causes the ping you hear. Severe knock will pound an engine to pieces if you let it go long enough. As a result, auto engineers have to be very careful about the compression pressures they use on a production car that must run on many different grades of fuel; even then you'll get a pretty good rattle sometimes on premium gas when a carboned-up engine is pulling hard. So obviously, if we could somehow *cool down* the fuel mixture after it vaporizes we could eliminate the knock, and maybe even use *more* compression than Detroit built into our engine without getting into trouble.

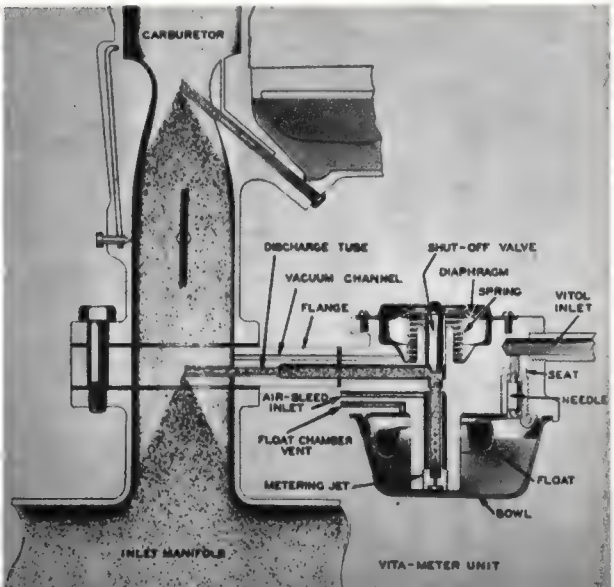
Anti-detonant injection is the answer.

As you know, a liquid will *absorb heat* when it evaporates. Put a little ether on your hand and feel the cold spot when it vaporizes. And that's why sweating controls the temperature of your body; the water absorbs heat from the skin when it evaporates. Same deal if you squirt a little water or alcohol into the fuel mixture in your engine manifold. It cools it and reduces peak cylinder temperatures.

Okay, now you're way ahead of me. Your next question: Why doesn't the evaporation of the gasoline itself cool the mixture? It *does* . . . but not enough. Alcohol will absorb 3½ times as much heat per pound as gasoline when it evaporates, and water will pull seven times as much. You need lots of internal cooling to kill that knock. Actually, water alone doesn't make a very good injection fluid for an ordinary automobile engine. Since it won't burn, too much of it merely serves to retard combustion in the cylinders; it'll kill the knock, but it chokes off horsepower, too. On the other hand, by mixing anywhere from 25 to 85% alcohol with the water, you get a neat boost in power along with getting rid of the knock.

Guess that's enough textbook [*Continued on page 52*]

Cross-section diagram of flange-mounted Vitameter.



THE TRUTH ABOUT HALF-MEN

Eunarchy, begun by a woman and still practiced in some parts of the world has, among other things, led to the development of leading statesmen and musicians

By Dale Wasserman

Illustrated by Tony Kokinos

In Peiping, China, atop Prospect Hill, there stands a lovely shrine dedicated to the memory of one Kang Ping, a god of the Chinese pantheon. His worshippers have certain odd characteristics in common; they are all old men, their voices are high-pitched, they are beardless, and thick about the hips. The event which made Kang Ping patron saint of this curious clan took place exactly five hundred years ago and contains the key to their identity.

It was during the reign of the great Ming emperor, Yung Lo, under whom Kang was generalissimo of the armies which had subdued the ferocious Mongols of the North. Emperor Yung had evidenced his gratitude to Kang by raising him, over violent objections from his ministers, to the position of vice-emperor. General Kang's troubles began the day that his ruler decided to go on an extended hunting trip and notified the court that in his absence Kang would be in charge. It was a signal honor, yet far from being jubilant over the Emperor's confidence Kang brooded, knowing that the jealousy of the royal courtiers held nothing but trouble for him.

The General was right. Emperor Yung had no sooner returned than Kang was summoned to the royal presence and charged by the Prime Minister with having raided the palace harem with the enthusiasm of a stud bull. Kang,

The word "eunuch," Greek in origin, means "guard." The Persians put them to work guarding the fabulous harems.

THE TRUTH ABOUT HALF-MEN

unflattered by this tribute to his virility, stood proudly at attention before his monarch, denied the charges, and said:

"If your Majesty will look into the hollow of the saddle upon which you rode away, you will find evidence that I speak the truth." The saddle was brought before Emperor Yung and its contents examined. Whereupon for extraordinary loyalty, Kang, though now unfitted to remain a general, was instantly made Chief Eunuch of the Palace. He died at a venerable age laden with honors, was deified and became the patron saint of eunuchs throughout the Orient.

Kang was a shining beacon in the fog obscuring semi-men. For it is not generally known that in every respect, save the sexual, eunuchs have been mightily potent men. History demonstrates that they have often been superior to the hormone-laden male in at least three fields—statesmanship, theology, and music. And their reputation for dark savagery may be understood in light of a defense against the animosity which has met the eunuch at every turn.

The word "eunuch," Greek in origin, means "guard." Oddly enough the practice of emasculating men began with a woman, Semiramis by name; builder of Babylon, Queen of Assyria, and one of the most notorious nymphomaniacs in history. This sex-ridden beauty was furiously jealous of every man commanded to the royal couch, and being unable to bear the thought of discarded lovers bringing ecstasy to other women, kept a surgeon standing by at all hours to render them incapable of doing so. Since her appetite was enormous, there soon was an army of wan young men eligible for positions as harem guards. The Persians, on the alert for new ideas, adopted the system and thus world-Eunarchy was born.

Although most closely associated with the Orient the semi-men were by no means confined to it. They appear, in fact, at every turning of the historical page. Even the beginnings of Christianity are interwoven with the story of a famous eunuch, Origin, a theologian who wrote over 6,000 works on the subject. Origin brooded over the problem of instructing women in Christian tenets without temptation —then, as a solution, castrated himself in his monastic cell in Alexandria. As far as the record is concerned he never regretted the act. What he did live to regret was that it gave rise to an entire sect of religious fanatics, the Valerians, who, taking example from their beloved leader, not only embraced self-castration as a religious duty, but also proselytized all who came within their reach, using fair means or foul. Thus many an innocent traveler falling in with a Valerian preaching-party found not only his religious outlook but also his physical being altered. The Valerians have lineal descendents in the Skopzi, of Russia, a group whose name, translated, describes its practice. Before the Iron Curtain fell there was evidence that the Skopzi had carried on with unabated enthusiasm to that very day, allowing practicality to overcome practice only long enough to beget more candidates for the knife.

Among other non-subscribing members was the famous Pierre Abelard, whose mutilation was inflicted by enemies to the dismay of his damsel, Heloise. Egypt boasted a long line of eunuch-statesmen who ruled from slightly behind and to the left of the throne. The name of Pothinus, who, in 50 B. C. dominated Pharoah Ptolemy completely, is prominent among them. And Christianity owes much to the formidable eunuch, Narses, general of the Byzantine armies under Justinian. Narses not only saved the empire from overthrow, but single-handedly, and after all masculine men had fled, went afield and drove the Goths from Italy, dying a natural death thereafter at a powerful 95 years of age. The latter days of Rome, incidentally, saw the practice of castration become popular, its victims being known as "spados." The operation used actually did little more than sterilize: hence, these "eunuchs" became extremely popular among Roman matrons. And the Lydians, already celebrated for their effeminacy, added a page to medical history by developing an operation for castration of women which produced an effect opposite to men; voices deepened, beards sprouted, breasts disappeared. The end-products of this fascinating experiment were used to guard valuable wives and daughters, as with male eunuchs.

What, the reader may ask, could have induced men to offer up their virility upon so horrible an altar? The astounding truth is that the great majority did so voluntarily and not by force or coercion. True, there was persuasion, but not of a sort which might not be resisted. The simple fact was that eunuchhood offered a life of security and high office: privilege, power, money.

The record in China substantiates this. Castration, beginning about 1200 B. C. as a punishment for criminals swiftly became so popular that supply exceeded demand. Boys were sold or donated in large numbers by ambitious families to the rich or royal. They became ministers and generals; many were to control dynasties. Men of all ages, seduced by prospects of high living, came voluntarily to the palace gates begging to be deflowered. They were accepted at almost any age, although boys castrated before the age of ten were considered especially pure, and were fondled in the beds of the court ladies like Pekingese dogs.

For centuries the Chinese procedure for creating neuters was formal as a church ceremony. Outside an inner gate of the palace stood the castration shed. Here reigned the terrible "Knifers" whose calling was hereditary and who depended upon the manufacture of eunuchs for their livelihood. Here applicants were examined, paid their fee, and were given an appointment. When the candidate reported for induction he was seated in the darkened shed, all others withdrew and, before the irrevocable, he was given an hour in which to meditate and withdraw his application if he so desired. At the end of the hour the "Knifer" would fling open the door, brandish his weapon before him and ask the ritual question: "Are you, miserable one, prepared to renounce your manhood for all your days upon this earth?" If the answer was still affirmative (and it usualy was) the "Knifer" would proceed without further ado to the business at hand. Calling powerfully muscled assistants to hold the agonized patient, he operated swiftly and without hesitation—without benefit, either, of anesthetic or disinfectant.

The mortality rate was high. How high is difficult to determine, for the "Knifers" concealed vital statistics. The recuperation period was one hundred days for an adult. After this came inspection by an older palace eunuch, and if found satisfactory, further inspection and choosing for service by the ladies of the harem who frequently quarreled over new candidates. From that point on life became a sinecure. But each castrate kept in some secret place a box containing the products of his mutilation so that they might be restored to his body when he died, the Chinese having a horror of entering Heaven incomplete. The sad fact, too, is that many repented of their action; for eunuchs do not necessarily lose all desire, and the nature of their employment in the harem sometimes meant agonies of frustration.

An incident in the reign of Ch'ien Lung in the eighteenth century dramatized this deplorable situation. President Liu, as cunning a minister as ever presided, became furious at the growing arrogance of the palace eunuchs and whispered to his sovereign certain rumors that both astounded and enraged His Highness. Emperor Ch'ien ordered an immediate inspection of all his eunuchs. The test was severe; a dozen slave girls, adept in the arts of titillation, were the examiners. After the results had been tabulated, thirty-one eunuchs were summarily beheaded. It has been represented (though upon doubtful authority) that several of the detached crania continued to wear blissful smiles. In any event, from this time on complete

emasculation was the rule in China.

Of a different bent was Wei-chung-hsien, a prince of the royal blood who, in a moment of youthful asceticism, had castrated himself and immediately repented. Wei kept concubines all his life in hopeful anticipation of a miracle. Despite their arts, he remained neuter. All his days were spent in looking for a cure; once the court physician, in desperation, told Wei that if he ate the brains of seven living men he would regain his virility. Wei promptly summoned seven convicts to his presence, fell upon them with a battleaxe, and dined in the prescribed manner. It seems cruel anti-climax, but we must report that the disconsolate Wei died without an heir. A hundred years later, in 1644, the entire Ming dynasty ended with the lives of two eunuchs, the first of whom, Tu-shih-'heng, opened the city gates to rebel chieftains and was promptly killed by them for his reward. The second was Wang Cheng-en, who accompanied the last Ming emperor to the top of Prospect Hill and committed suicide with him so that he would not be lonely in death.

But most famous of the modern Chinese eunuchs was undoubtedly Li Lien-ying, companion, confidant, and unofficial ruler under the fabulous dowager Empress, Tzu Hsi. In his delicate hands Li held all threads of power and intrigue; officials of great states danced like puppets to his commands. For forty years he ruled China, made and unmade ministers, levied personal tribute on the eighteen provinces. Fantastic rumors swirled about his head; one of these that he was not a eunuch at all, but a virile man and lover to the Empress. This, by eye-witness testimony happened to be untrue, but the manner of Li's coming to power was dramatic enough for the most sensational appetite.

The year was 1894, China was locked in its struggle with Japan, and the nation was tense, for it was rumored that Tzu Hsi was dying. In the Forbidden City the Empress lay in her jade-and-ivory bed, gazing stonily at the family and courtiers gathered about her.

"I know that I am going to die," she said, "because I have no one so devoted to me that he will give me the only medicine that will cure my illness."

All but one of the people present shrank from her bed, for they knew what she meant—the ancient Chinese belief that one dying might have health restored by eating the flesh of a relative or faithful friend.

Then they silently crept from the bedchamber, but that evening a roasted portion of flesh was brought the Empress, accompanied by a note from the [*Continued on page 51*]

THE EARTH SHRINKER

On the morning of July 25, 1870, less than a year and two months after he had assisted in driving the golden spike into a cross tie at Ogden, Utah, commemorating the completion of the first trans-continental railroad, a slim, intense-looking man boarded the Union Pacific Railroad train in New York City.

His name was George Francis Train, he was 41 years old, and his luxuriant moustaches bristled with challenge. Train was not truculent with people; his life-long foe was distance, an enemy which he never ceased trying to conquer with speed. He was off to prove to a skeptical America that he could travel around the entire world in the fantastically short period of 80 days.

Seven days later, on August 1, Train got out of a dusty coach with his two bags, hired a hack and, amidst a cheering crowd, clattered off to the docks where he boarded the German steamer, Abyssinia for Japan. His timing in spanning the continent was excellent. He caught the vessel with two hours to spare.

It took 16 days for the Abyssinia to reach Yokohama where Train was to embark on the American ship, Alaska, for Indo-China.

In Yokohama he missed connections. The Alaska had sailed for Kobe, he was advised. Kobe was 300 miles overland, across Japan. He engaged a horse and wagon and started off. It was too slow. Sixty miles further on he came to a Japanese cavalry garrison. He paid an exorbitant price for two cavalry remounts, one for himself, one for his saddle bags. Thus he arrived in Kobe.

There the authorities informed him it would be necessary for him to have a sailing visa. He asked how long it would take.

"Only three or four days," he was told. "First of course your passport must be presented by the American legation and then—"

"Can't it be speeded up?" Train asked. "I must get aboard the Alaska when it arrives."

"But the Alaska is not making Kobe this voyage," the Legation advised him. "Too bad you were misinformed in Yokohama. The ship sailed from there to Hong Kong."

Train had his visa in seven hours. He chartered a sampan to Hong Kong. In Hong Kong luck was with him. He caught up with the Alaska in the harbor just as it was clearing for Saigon. It took him three days to reach Indo-China, four more to get to Singapore where he sought passage on a ship which would take him to Port Said. Forty hours later the Donai of the Messagerie Imperiale Line came into Singapore en route to Port Said and Marsailles, France.

Ten days later he debarked at the quay to the cheers of an excited crowd. "Liberator! Liberator!" they chanted to the puzzled Train and bore him and his two carpet bags in triumph to the Grand Hotel de Louvre.

He was still wondering what it was all about when a delegation of Frenchmen entered his suite and again bore him off, this time without his bags, to the opera house. By now he was convinced that there was a case of mistaken identity involved.

"Gentlemen," he protested, "I am an American. George Francis Train."

"Train, the Liberator!" they shouted.

"They told me that six thousand people were waiting for me in the opera house," Train was later to record in his autobiography. "I was incredulous and asked why they were waiting and for how long. I was told they had been waiting for hours and that they wanted me to address them in behalf of the revolution."

What had happened was that the French Empire had fallen while Train was aboard the Donai and somehow the newly-arisen Commune had obtained the impression that his purpose in coming to Marsailles was to give them a "message of liberty" from the American Government.

Train hated to disappoint anyone. He delivered the "message" in the opera house and was resoundingly applauded. Then a squad of French soldiers marched into the opera house with fixed bayonets and arrested him. He was promptly whisked off to the Bastille in Lyons where he was detained for a week before he was released by Gambetta and sped on his way.

Once again he was off. To Paris and Calais where the British, sympathetic to his goal, immediately put him aboard a fast Channel mail packet for Dover.

From Dover he hastened to Liverpool where he secured passage on the original Majestic which sailed for New York City a few hours afterwards. When he arrived in the harbor there was a large welcoming committee on ships to greet him. And when he came ashore at the Battery his feet touched the ground, after his record-shattering 'round the world trip, in just three hours under 80 days.—**Emile C. Schurmacher**

Five-Ton Disappearing Act

by George Wurzburger

1 George Wurzburger leans happily against the carcass of a five-ton bull elephant he brought down with a .475 #2 Jeffreys double-barreled elephant gun he's holding. He killed him with a .30-06. Then the bearers went to work.

2 The first and toughest job was getting the valuable tusks off. The Wakamba boys had to chop deep into the jaw to get at the deep roots. They found Wurzburger's .30-06 bullet imbedded in the upper tip of one tusk.

It was toward the end of the dry season in Kenya's fabulous Northwest Frontier. I had already hunted there, within sight of famous, snow-capped Kilimanjaro for over three weeks, locating unusual game specimens for American museums. It occurred to me that all that time, though we'd been in and out of elephant country countless times, I hadn't once seen any elephant remains. Elephants died. What then? I knew the stories of their disappearing acts, but I wondered about the ones who were shot. The question gnawed at me until I had to get an answer.

"What happens to a dead elephant's carcass? How come I don't see any around?" I asked white hunter Victor Bentley.

"You'll find out when you shoot one yourself," he answered smilingly.

The next day I shot my first elephant.

After Bentley had confirmed my kill and taken one picture of me by the fallen bull, he said, "Now you'll see what happens to the elephants." He held up his hand as a signal for quiet. "Listen. They've started already. Hear that?"

"Yes," I told him. "What is it?"

"Jungle drums—the natives' signal to 'come and get it.' We'll have to get busy with those tusks—they'll be swarming over us like flies in a few minutes."

As soon as the Wakamba bearers had cut off the prized tail and given it to me, I moved back and watched the show.

This is what I saw. •

3 Other bearers worked on the feet which are later made into hassocks and umbrella stands by a Nairobi taxidermist.

4 The feet are gone, but the tusk work goes on. Now the bearers watch as intestinal gas and the hot weather combine to force the elephant's large intestine out through a skinning cut. Already a hungry crowd has gathered.

5 While the bearers take advantage of their rights and go after the prime cuts, the crowd gets bigger until some 200 men, women and children have gathered for the elephant feast. At first they were orderly and patient.

6 Then they crowded closer until the bearers were forced to drive them back. When they were finally let at the carcass, they packed the meat into bags they carried. The women are in their "best" for the festive occasion.

7 Malinda, Wurzburger's gun bearer, chose the trunk though the safari had gazelle steaks and other choice meat in their larder. He dragged the trunk away from the activity around the carcass, let it "age," then ate the flesh raw.

8 After the natives left, the hyenas chewed up the bones. Vultures finished the job. Disappearing time—four hours.

THE WEIRD HOBBY OF

He likes to spend sunny afternoons hunting down the quick-striking killers

William B. "Rattlesnake Bill" Smith had climbed halfway up the steep, brush-covered slope when he saw the rattlesnake. At least five feet long, it was sunning itself on a rock. But, as Smith edged closer, it rapidly uncoiled and slithered into a hole nearby.

Smith leaped forward and with his long-handled "snake fork" managed to pin the snake's tail to the ground, just above the rattles, before it vanished completely into the hole. The mostly "invisible" reptile angrily lashed about on its visible tail, its rattles buzzing ominously. But Smith, holding the fork down firmly with his left hand, knelt on a rock and coolly grasped the squirming fleshy part of the tail with his right hand—intending to jerk the snake out of its lair and fling it onto open ground. Next, following his customary procedure, Smith would again quickly pin down the reptile with his pronged stick—this time at the "safe" spot a couple of inches behind its dangerous head, which would prevent it from striking. And then, by manipulating a gadget on his fork—a spring-controlled, rubber-lined steel collar that closed like a handcuff—he would clamp the snake firmly by its "neck," and, with it suspended thus from the end of his five-foot snake-catching tool, he would be ready to tote it off alive. That was Smith's usual, foolproof technique.

But this rattlesnake gave him a nasty surprise.

Just as Smith's hand closed around its squirming tail to yank it out of the hole, the rattler's flat head popped out of a second hole close by and lunged straight at him, hissing mad—its beady eyes glittering and its jaws agape! Paralyzed, Smith felt its forked tongue actually flick his right wrist, while its two curved, needle-pointed fangs, each backed by a poison sac, were poised to strike—only a fraction of an inch away. But there the snake stopped. Though it obviously was stretching itself to the limit against the hold Smith had on its tail, it could not quite reach him. Nor could Smith, no matter how hard he tugged, gain an inch more of tail (and thus pull the dangerous head an inch farther away from his wrist). For the snake's whole muscular body was rigid—and, as long as it remained so, it could not be budged from its strategic U-shaped redoubt.

Here was a predicament straight out of a nightmare.

Smith knew he didn't dare let go of the snake's tail to move his hand out of reach or to try to jump back. For a rattlesnake's reactions are much faster than a human's. And the moment he eased up, even slightly, on his hold on the snake—with the speed of lightning the rattler would bury its death-dealing fangs in his wrist.

But, fortunately, Smith's lifetime of experience in capturing deadly Eastern Timber rattlesnakes had given him the knowledge with which to save himself. All he needed to do, he knew, was to hang on tightly and not lose his "nerve."

So he hung on—though, as the big rattler continued to hiss and to dart its forked tongue damply against his wrist in furious frustration, beads of perspiration formed on Smith's forehead that weren't caused entirely by the mid-

Bill Smith of Weedville, Pa., displays a few of the handsome trophies collected during a foray into nearby mountains.

"RATTLESNAKE BILL"

by Gordon Schendel

day July sun, although Bill Smith wouldn't readily admit it.

After 10 minutes of the weird tug-of-war, the muscles of the powerful snake momentarily relaxed. Taking advantage of this, Smith managed to drag another inch of tail out of the hole—and had the satisfaction of seeing the gaping, venom-filled jaws retreat from his wrist an equal distance—before the snake again became rigid and immovable.

During the next half hour, Smith was able to repeat the maneuver three times, though each time the snake again contracted its muscles and resumed its tight hugging of the walls of its U-shaped refuge. Smith's arm grew practically numb with fatigue and strain, and several times he almost relaxed his grip. However, his fourth "gain" pulled the snake's head out of sight inside the second hole and suddenly, he felt virtually no resistance to his unceasing attempt to pull it out. Bracing himself for a final effort, he jerked the snake, tail first, out of the original hole and flung its heavy writhing length hurriedly down-slope. A second later, he had it pinned to earth again with his forked tool, this time just behind the angrily hissing head. After that, it was easy enough to clamp it with the gadget on his snake-catching fork and sling it, on the end of the stick, over his shoulder—its dangling body whipping about and its rattles buzzing furiously, but futilely.

"Rattlesnake Bill" Smith didn't let his narrow escape faze him. He went on that afternoon to catch six other big rattlers alive, to kill a few more, and to bring back his trophies, in a wooden box in his car, to the sleepy crossroads village of Weedville, situated in one of the wildest sections of northwestern Pennsylvania, in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains. There, he added his squirming captives to the more than 100 big rattlesnakes he keeps in outdoor cages beside his Route 555 garage and filling station. And, after displaying his dead trophies to admiring cronies, he interred them in a long trench behind his garage—just as, he says, over the years he has buried no less than 20,000 of their dangerous fellows! He backs this claim with hundreds of photographs of his huge daily "bags" of rattlers and the testimony of his neighbors.

No sooner had I arrived in Weedville than this 67-year-old, latter-day St. Patrick took me over to one of his two screened snake cages and opened the top. He jabbed his pronged snake tool into the tangle of rattlesnakes lying torpidly inside and with the stick's clamping gadget seized and drew one out. He grabbed it by the "neck" and released the stick's spring, so that he was holding the heavy rattler with only his bare hand. It was a yellow specimen fully five feet long and five inches in diameter at its thickest point, with dark, blotchy diamond-like markings and a dozen rattles.

"A beauty, ain't he?" Smith asked, thrusting the sluggishly squirming, dangling thick body toward me. "Go ahead—I've got a good hold on him—feel his muscles!"

I felt—gingerly. The scaly skin was dry, not slimy, and had the firm, faintly resilient quality of a rubber tire.

Smith snaps up writhing snake he has just pinned to the ground with special forked pole. Spring in prong clamps down behind snake's head to keep rattler from striking.

The snake's small beady, lidless eyes stared coldly at me, and suddenly the flat pit-viper head opened its mouth and hissed malevolently. Smith chuckled and tossed his surly pet back among its massed fellows.

Smith explains his life-long feud with the death-dealing rattlers as due simply to a desire to rid the countryside of a pest which constitutes a danger for humans and livestock.

He dates the beginning of his vendetta with the rattlesnakes to his boyhood on his father's small "ridge" farm on nearby Gardner Hill, when he and his brother waged incessant war against the reptiles that bit and occasionally killed the family's livestock, ate its poultry and terrorized its womenfolk. "We two boys sometimes killed 100 rattlers in a day," Smith recalls, with satisfaction. "But they were a heck of a lot more plentiful then than nowadays. And I hope they'll be a lot *less* plentiful before I'm through!"

Nonetheless, after a lengthy talk with the short, stocky, grizzled Smith, I'm convinced that his assumption of a pest-ridding "duty" is not his chief reason for hunting rattlesnakes. The real explanation for "Rattlesnake Bill" Smith, as I see it, is that he hunts rattlesnakes simply because he revels in the danger involved!

Born 200 years too late, he would have been happiest as a frontiersman matching his wits and muzzle-loading flintlock against the claws and teeth of b'ar and panther, like Dan'l Boone. This was obvious when he told me, with deep respect, of long-dead Pete Smith, who'd been a noted hunter. "Uncle Pete killed the last panther in this section, in 1890," he explained proudly. "Shot it after it'd torn up both his two dogs."

But since there are no more big predators in his neck of the woods, Smith found a way to get an equal "charge" in hunting rattlesnakes.

Although capturing alive, or merely killing, rattlers by even the safest of techniques involves enough unavoidable risk to more than satisfy the average thrill-seeker, Smith purposely gives the reptiles a more than sporting chance to win and, correspondingly, increases the danger for himself: Instead of wearing high boots to protect his legs from death-dealing fangs, while tramping through the snake-infested brush Smith wears only low canvas sneakers (with sponge-rubber soles, to enable him to approach his quarry noiselessly) and no socks at all. (Fantastic though this sounds, socks actually afford some protection; if a snake strikes through cloth, the fabric may absorb up to 75 percent of the venom.) Furthermore, Smith adamantly refuses to carry a "snake-bite kit"—which, with its antitoxin, is standard equipment for summer vacationers in snake territory. (When Smith discovered that his married daughter, worried over his vulnerability, had bought such a kit and surreptitiously slipped it into his car one day, he furiously hurled it into the river.) In addition, Smith conducts his operations under what some men might consider almost prohibitive physical handicaps for such hazardous "sport": During the last few years he has suffered increasingly from arthritis, with the result that, as he puts it, he no longer "gets around as spry" as formerly. And he's become partially deaf and so cannot be sure of hearing the reptiles' warning rattles.

Despite all this, the 67-year-old serpent-slayer—who, incidentally, always hunts alone—last summer safely "bagged" and brought home a total of 637 rattlesnakes, 242 of which he captured alive!

Throughout the summer, tourists, and local residents as well, seldom miss a chance to look at Smith's caged live rattlesnakes when they stop at his filling station, and Smith is obviously very pleased whenever a small crowd congregates about his snakes—though he charges no admission to his exhibit. In fact, he is as likely as not to leave a customer impatiently waiting at the gasoline pumps—while he ambles over to the cages and hauls out specimens. And he is very proud of receiving letters inquiring on controversial aspects of rattlesnakes, from some of these same tourists afterward, addressed simply to "Rattlesnake Bill, Weedville, Pa."

However, every fall around November 15, Smith empties his cages by killing all his rattlers because he doesn't want to bother caring for them indoors. (In their natural state, they hibernate in holes, rock crevices and caves during the winter.) Once or twice, the temperature dropped to below freezing before he got around to disposing of the snakes.

"They froze so solid," Smith says, "I could break them in two like icicles!"

Smith, who is divorced, lives in a sparsely furnished bachelor apartment in his garage. He is a soft-spoken man, extremely economical of words and reluctant to talk about his exploits. Persistent prying, however, resulted in my getting from him some rather remarkable anecdotes of "close shaves" which matched the one at the beginning of this article.

For instance, there was the time last summer when "Rattlesnake Bill" squinted down a three-foot-deep crevice in a rock and spotted a big rattler at the bottom. But before he could get his forked stick into action, the snake glided out of reach under an overhanging rock shelf.

Smith meandered about the hillside for a few minutes, then pussyfooted it back to the rock to see if the rattler had reappeared. Leaning on his stick, he peered into the crevice, but failed to sight his quarry. Then he happened to glance behind him. There, on top of the rock, coiled and obviously preparing at that very moment to strike, with its head just six inches from his bare ankle—was the missing rattlesnake!

"The only thing I had time to do was make a fast swipe at the critter with my stick," Smith said. "But that was enough to make him strike at the stick, instead of my ankle."

He smiled slowly.

"It gave me a chance to jump back out of his way, and, why then, I just pinned him down to the rock with my stick." He spat and raised a lighted match to the soggy cigar butt clamped between his teeth. "After that, I took a good look at the venom he'd sprayed when he struck. It lay in a puddle on the rock—a big tablespoonful of greenish-yellow stuff—three times as much as a snake usually 'shoots.'"

He grinned. "I'd 'a been a goner for sure if he'd sent all that poison into my ankle!"

Smith tilted his chair back and explained that the amount of venom a rattler discharges depends upon how recently he's struck before. And three strikes in rapid succession will virtually empty the snake's poison sacs—and make the fourth bite relatively harmless.

It's possible, Smith elaborated, to train a few unusually smart, quick and fearless dogs to kill poisonous snakes by teaching them to take advantage of this fact. He said he and his brother had had such a dog, and he told of one unforgettable battle it had had with a big rattler in a canebrake. The dog, by recklessly charging in, time after time, in feinted attacks and then dodging back, had provoked the rattler into furiously striking, and expending its venom harmlessly, on the intervening canes. And, though the dog had been bitten a total of *seven* times toward the end of the battle when he'd become careless, by then the rattler's poison-sacs had been almost completely emptied. The scrappy dog finally had ended the battle by grabbing the rattler and shaking it so violently that:

". . . Its belly ripped open and snake guts flew thirty feet in all directions!"

Smith added that, immediately after its victory, the dog had disappeared for several days into a swamp. It had reappeared cured of its bites and as good as new. He said it had followed age-old instinct in seeking out black swamp muck in which to lie—"knowing" that such muck had the power to "draw out" poison.

(Incidentally, the only enemies rattlesnakes have, besides the few trained "snake-killer" dogs and humans, are hawks and owls, which will pounce on and fly away with them, and hogs. Hogs are ideal for clearing land of rattlesnakes, for the snakes' fangs can't effectually pierce their thick, tough hides, and the hogs themselves savor snake meat and will hunt down and eat the reptiles with relish.)

Smith has had many "close shaves" while bagging rattlers, needless to say. But one a couple of years ago was particularly nightmarish—or, at least, would have been so for most people.

He saw a big old snake sunning itself under a limestone ledge and, since it was a particularly brilliant yellow and brown specimen, he decided he wanted it alive and crawled beneath the low-hanging ledge on hands and knees—until he got close enough to use his five-foot snake fork. He "stabbed" at the rattler and managed to pin it down at the ideal spot just behind its head. But in so doing he bumped the ledge overhead and dislodged a stone, which fell in a cloud of dust that momentarily blinded him and covered the end of his stick and the

snake. In a minute, however, the dust had partly settled and he could see again. So, continuing to hold the fork firmly down with his left hand, he thrust his right hand into the dust to grasp the snake just back of its head.

"But dammit," Smith recalled, with a wry grin, "I couldn't find any snake to grab hold of! It'd gotten away when the rock fell. I sure pulled my hand back in a hurry. And just as I did, the snake's head reared up out of the dust about two feet away and struck.

"Lucky for me, it missed my hand, but it struck my right pants leg—catching its fangs in the cloth!"

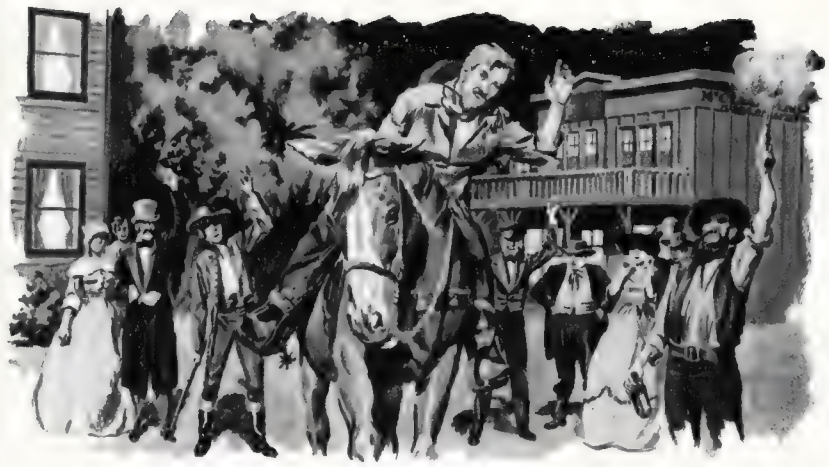
Smith hurriedly crawled out from beneath the ledge, dragging the big rattler, which was thrashing about furiously, still attached by its hooked fangs to his wool pants. (Striking through wool or silk will always entangle a snake's fangs, Smith says.) Once out where he could stand erect, Smith grasped the rattler behind its head and tore its entangled fangs loose from his pants. Then it was a simple matter to snap his stick's spring-controlled "collar" onto the snake and lug his writhing captive to his wooden "snake box."

Almost anyone, after such an experience, would have taken a couple of stiff drinks to settle his nerves—and called it a day. But Smith calmly went on to knock off 35 more rattlers that afternoon.

Smith usually carries a .22 caliber Colt Woodsman's revolver, and shoots snakes he's not interested in capturing alive. He explains that only shells which are loaded with shot are effective against snakes—for they spray in a wide-enough pattern to cut a snake in two: "I've seen a rattler with six .45 caliber slugs in it, and its guts spilling out from all those holes in its hide, crawl away and escape. They're tough babies. You've got to cut their spinal cord, and somewhere in the front two-thirds, to kill 'em. Hell, I've cut off the last third of a rattler and watched the rest of it go off as though nothing had happened."

It was surprising to me to find in the long-settled eastern part of the United States an area in which rattlesnakes are as numerous as they are in "Rattlesnake Bill's" territory. (The hills near Kinzua are so thick with rattlers that the Pennsylvania State Conservation Department annually bars trout fishermen from the area after June 1—to minimize the number of snake-bite casualties.) However, as Smith points out, the region—which once was an important coal-mining center, though today the mines are mostly worn-out and abandoned—is ideal topography for rattlers. It consists of sparsely-inhabited, brush-choked, stony hills and ridges watered by many springs and "runs" and rich in the small game upon which rattlesnakes feed.

Yet, even though the Eastern Timber rattlesnakes are so numerous in the Weedville area, they are far from easy to capture. This was learned the hard way last summer by two 2-man teams of snake-catchers sent out to capture live specimens for the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh zoos. After spending two weeks tramping through the hills with their paraphernalia, the city slickers still



AMERICA'S GREATEST RIDE

Who made the greatest one-man horseback ride in American history? The distinction belongs to Felix Xavier Aubry, a name now forgotten by all but a few historians.

The year was 1848. Aubry, an independent trader, lived in Santa Fe but made frequent trips across the plains. Generally, it took some three to four weeks to ride the 800 miles from Santa Fe to Independence; military mail made it in 30 days and ox wagons required from two to three months to make the trip. But one day in early January '48, Aubry rode into the town of Independence—just 12 days after leaving Santa Fe! A few weeks later he did it again, chopping four whole days off his previous record.

Late that summer he returned to Santa Fe and found the whole town talking about his rides. With no trace of boastfulness in his voice, the little trader announced loudly, "Don't see what you folks find so unusual. Fact is, I can do better than eight days. I figure a man can make it 'tween here and Independence in six days. And I got a thousand dollars says I can!"

A man pushed his way through the crowd and said, "The man ain't been born that can ride eight hundred miles in six days 'thout killin' hisself! I'll take a piece of that there thousand dollar bet!"

Before the sun had set that day, Felix Aubry had his $1,000 covered. He immediately sent two or three men ahead with horses.

He knew he could get fresh horses at Fort Mann on the Aakansas River and further on at Council Grove. During part of the trip he would drive extra mounts ahead of him, transferring from one to another as the animals wore out. He didn't figure on himself wearing out. The ride, like its two predecessors, was to be strictly "solo."

The whole town of Santa Fe turned out to watch Felix Aubry that early afternoon of September 12, 1848, as he climbed into the saddle.

Down the mountains, past Pecos village and on to Las Vegas where fresh horses awaited him, thundered Aubry. Except for the lonely outpost of Fort Mann on the Arkansas, it was more than 500 miles to the next settlement. Hour after hour through the night the tiny trader gallops, hardly ever slackening the killing pace. Dawn was still groping its way through the inky blackness when he neared Point of Rocks and gave the long drawn out "coyote yell" of the West.

It is responded to by one of the men whom he sent on ahead a week earlier. The man gestures to a pot of coffee which Aubry drains in a matter of minutes. By the time he has finished, a fresh horse is saddled and ready to go. Dolly is her name and she is famed for her speed and endurance.

Once again Aubry is in the saddle, one hand on the reins, the other clutching a chunk of broiled Buffalo meat. On go horse and rider, leaving the high, dry country behind them. They splash through Rabbit Ear Creek and on to roaring Willow Bar. Oh! Oh! Where are the relay horses?

A sudden chill sweeps through Felix Aubry. Where are the horses. Indians, maybe? Indians, yes! They had been and left, taking with them the horses and leaving behind another agent of Aubry's dead and scalped. Aubry pats Dolly's heaving flanks.

"Well, old girl, think you're up to going on?" Dolly is. The magnificent animal carries her rider until she has chalked up a record of her own. One hundred and fifty miles she carries her rider in the Horse Age when 50 or 60 miles on one mount was considered a day's ride and eighty or a hundred was something to talk about.

At the Cimmarron of the quicksands, Aubry and the exhausted Dolly find three horses, saddled and ready.

Fort Mann passes into limbo; Council Grove coming up. At Council Grove, Aubry pauses only long enough to boil a pot of coffee, gulp it. Then he ties himself to a fresh horse and the killing pace continues. There is no longer any feeling in Aubry's tortured legs; they are dead. And so is he, damn near. It takes him a full day's time to make that last 150 mile lap.

It is late the night of September 17th as men come from the old Merchant's Hotel bar, unlash the rider's legs and lift the almost unconscious man from his saddle. The saddle is caked with blood. Aubry has won his bet; the most incredible lone ride in America's history is ended.

Compared to Felix Xavier Aubry, pint-sized pony-pusher, the much-publicized "Midnight Ride" of Paul Revere was just a leisurely canter through the park.

—Murray T. Pringle

had not one snake to show for their efforts, and they disgustedly looked up "Rattlesnake Bill" for advice.

"I advised them to buy some of mine," he told me, drily. "And that's what they did."

Rattlers are hard to catch, Smith says, because their hearing is so acute and they prefer to avoid humans if they can. When they hear one approaching, they simply glide away—which is why many people who live in rattlesnake territory seldom, if ever, see one.

A rattler feeds by taking an animal or bird into its mouth, head-first, and then, by a steady sucking action, slowly engulfs it. This may take hours. The snake's jaws unhinge, so it can swallow whole prey with a diameter twice that of its "normal" jaws. Such prey in the process becomes elongated to twice its normal length—slitting open a snake which has just fed, Smith often has found a rabbit or squirrel shaped like a dachshund! After a rattler starts swallowing its prey, he says, it's virtually impossible to pull it out of the snake's mouth, for it becomes impaled on the tiny, needle-like teeth which all slant inward.

Rattlers will eat only live prey which they themselves kill, so Smith provides his captive snakes with quantities of live rats he catches in box traps set on the grounds of the nearby public school (to which the rodents are attracted by the dropped scraps from the children's box lunches). However, long ago Smith discovered that when he tossed live rats into his two tightly-screened snake cages (each of which usually contains during the summers more than 50 live rattlers), the snakes, astonishingly, completely ignored these "dinners-on-the-hoof." The rats, however, understandably became so terrorized they immediately started wildly racing around and around in the cages—climbing up and down the sides and actually running back and forth across the snakes lying coiled and entangled in a solid mass on the floor—and they continued their panic-stricken insane running, without stopping, for three days and three nights—until they dropped dead of exhaustion. And during all that time, the rattlesnakes never made a threatening move toward the rats!

Smith was desperate to get his listless scaly captives to eat and finally he put some live rats in a small wooden box, in one side of which he'd drilled a single snake-size hole. That afternoon, he set the box containing the rats on the floor of one of the snakes' cages, after first plugging the hole with a wadded-up rag to which he'd tied a strong cord leading outside the cage. At midnight, he sneaked up and, grasping the end of the cord, jerked out the rag plug. Within minutes, Smith told me, he saw by the moonlight first one rattlesnake and then another glide over and poke its head into the hole in the box. And the next morning, when he opened it, the rats all had vanished—while many of the snakes had developed "bay windows."

"Once they're caged up, rattlers seem to give up and just don't give a damn for anything," Smith told me. "They gotta be 'tempted' or they'll starve to death. They just weren't interested in the rats unless they could 'steal' them."

A rattlesnake eats nothing but poisoned food. For, before it can catch and swallow a feathered or furry victim, it must sink its fangs into it and expel its deadly venom into the wound. "I've seen one of these big Timber rattlers lash out and 'bite' a squirrel as it ran past," Smith said. "And before the squirrel could get ten feet farther, it keeled over!"

A rattlesnake's poison is contained in two sacs at the roots of its long, curved needle-like fangs, and it is expelled whenever these sacs are squeezed by the snake's action of closing its jaws in the "bite." Nature has guaranteed that the thick, mucus-like venom reaches the two tiny punctures made by the rattler's fangs, for the spurting poison follows a tiny, open groove on the under side of each fang. (Fangs often are broken off in striking, and with each growing-in of a new pair of fangs, this open furrow becomes more nearly closed—until in an old snake, it is completely closed and the fangs are like hollow hypodermic needles.) Obviously, the rattlesnake is itself immune to its poison, a dose of which it swallows with each victim; in fact, the poison thus absorbed may help it digest its meal.

Poisonous snakes fall into two categories, on the basis of their venom: The poison of the pit vipers, represented in the U.S. by rattlesnakes, copperheads and water moccasins, has a hemolytic effect—it breaks down the victim's capillaries and causes internal bleeding. Except with small animals and birds, in which the factor of shock is involved, such a poison fortunately doesn't cause immediate death. The other type of poison, represented in the U.S. by the Coral snake, has a neurotoxic effect—it paralyzes the nervous system, including the nerves which control breathing and the heart muscles. And it, therefore, can cause almost instantaneous death.

Smith says he himself never has been bitten by a rattlesnake—which certainly is remarkable, in view of the enormous number he's handled. The closest thing to a "snake-bite remedy" he ever carries is a penknife, and he advises that anyone unlucky enough to be bitten simply tie a tourniquet above the bite, and cut a single slit in his flesh just long enough to join the snake's two fang punctures.

"Then squeeze the flesh around the cut," he adds, "so the blood spurts out."

He claims that if this is done fast enough the squeezing will expel most of the snake's venom, before it's had time to be carried throughout the circulatory system. And the next step, of course, is to rush the victim to a hospital. Smith criticizes the usual first-aid advice to slash a cross over the bitten area, on the grounds that such extensive cutting merely lessens the force with which the venom-loaded blood spurts out of the puncture site. And he urgently warns against sucking a snake-bite if one has unhealthy gums, for this draws the venom into the "sucker's" bloodstream at a point particularly dangerous because of its nearness to the brain.

Smith corrected several less-melodramatic but equally erroneous ideas I myself had had about rattlesnakes, such as that each rattle denotes a year of age. Though this roughly holds true in desert regions where rattlesnakes usually shed their skins, and add a rattle (each rattle actually is what the snake retains of an otherwise completely discarded old skin), no more than once a year—it certainly is not true in northwestern Pennsylvania.

"Rattlers hereabouts shed their skins and add a rattle three times a year," Smith explained. "And though they live to about seven or eight years, I've seen only a few with as many as twenty rattlers. A snake often loses a couple rattlers when they catch between rocks."

A rattlesnake shedding its skin, Smith told me, really is "quite a show!" He said the snake first seeks out a damp spot, usually under a rock—for it must keep its skin moist so it will be pliable. The snake will "yawn" repeatedly, and rub its "nose" against a rock, to loosen the old skin around its mouth and start it peeling back. Then, lying stretched out in a straight line, it will peel its old skin off by a fantastic muscular "shimmying" which starts just behind its head and moves progressively toward its tail.

"If the skin is damp and soft, this may take only 15 minutes," Smith said. "Otherwise it'll maybe take days."

"Rattlesnake Bill" also told me that the idea that a rattlesnake always hisses when angered, and always shakes its rattles in a shrill warning before striking, is "a lot of bunk."

"No more than six out of ten rattle before they strike," he said. "And only one in a hundred will hiss."

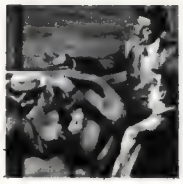
Smith scoffed, too, at the notion that a rattler must be tightly coiled before it can strike. He said it can strike a distance equal to two-thirds of its length, as long as the final third of its length is flat on the ground, in any position. And if you tread on a rattler's tail, it can whip around and hurl its full length at you. Furthermore, he's seen a rattlesnake on a hill fling itself down-slope in a strike equal to twice its length.

Smith also told me he'd disproved to his own satisfaction the common belief that rattlesnakes with yellow or brown skins were females and those with black skins were males.

"Hell," he snorted, "I've cut open more than 2,000. And I've found young snakes inside every color rattler." He chuckled. "To me, at least, that proved those snakes were females!"

Rattlesnakes, incidentally, bring forth their young—from 7 to 21 in a litter—alive, as do copperheads and water snakes. Blacksnakes, spotted adders and ground snakes, on the other hand, lay squarish-looking white eggs.

Rattlesnakes breed once a year, mostly in May though occasionally in June, and give birth to their young in late July or early August. Smith, who's witnessed rattlers mating many times, said that they do so exactly like mammals. (A 4-foot male rattler has a penis four inches long and as thick as a lead pencil, which except during mating is retracted completely within its body.) Smith comments that rattlesnakes remain "fast" for hours. Which inspires the thought that the popular wisecrack based on the mating of minks might better refer to snakes. •



PADDY THE FIXER

Continued from page 27

Bobby didn't have such a pretty set of teeth as Kalakaua. The plug's teeth were badly stained while Kalakaua's were nice and white. The little Irishman simply stained Kalakaua's China.

Kalakaua didn't hold his tail quite as high as Bobby did. Paddy inserted a few pinches of ginger under Kalakaua's tail and up went the tail.

By the time Paddy finished his experiment the ringer looked like a twin of the plug. The deal was on. The plot was that the Capones would take Bobby, run him a few times so as to build up a bad record for him, then ring Kalakaua for Bobby and make a clean-up.

The groundwork laid, Paddy began looking around for a spot to pull the ringing. From his knowledge of tracks, he knew that the protective system at Washington Park, a Chicago track, was not very tight. He would be able to take both Kalakaua and Bobby to the track in separate vans, identify the ringer as the plug, then switch horses.

The ringing was set for Labor Day, 1930. Both horses checked into Washington Park the day before, Paddy hanging around to see that nobody went near Bobby's van. There was a torrential rain the night before the race. Kalakaua was a poor mudder and Paddy tried to reach the gangsters by phone to get them to scratch the horse but the boys were out of reach, scattered all over Chicago wiring bets to all parts of the country.

Next morning, Paddy slipped into the ringer's cell and gave it a jolt of dope. Then, before post time, Paddy, all decked out in flashy clothes, palmed himself off as a trainer for Doctor Ogle, the former owner of Kalakaua, and identified Bobby as Kalakaua. The gangsters got to the track just in time for the race.

The ringer broke fast from the barrier despite the fact that he wasn't a mudder. At the quarter turn he looked like a winner. Then he hit a particularly soft spot in the turf and almost fell.

Jockey Peternell, who thought he was riding Bobby, saved Kalakaua from a spill by skillful handling. Although the horse lost ground it came in third and got the gansters off the hook.

The race over, Paddy hustled the ringer into a van and ordered the driver to get it off the grounds. Meantime, other stable hands walked the real Bobby Dean into the fake Bobby Dean's stall and, at Paddy's instructions, threw several buckets of warm soapy water over it, giving it the appearance of sweating after its run.

The whole operation attracted no attention whatsoever as horses were always being walked around the ground for exercise and taken in and out of vans. A track official stopped by to inquire if "Bobby Dean" had been injured in the near spill. A Capone goon told the official the horse was all right. Actually Kalakaua had to be destroyed.

The Capone mob saw a great future in Paddy. They bought stables for him near the Lake County Fair Grounds outside Crown Point, Indiana. There he had access to the Fair Grounds track.

Paddy was never one to sacrifice competence for haste. Immersed in racing forms and thumbing through his horse dossiers, it wasn't until the fall of 1931 that he picked out two horses that bore similar outward physical characteristics and that otherwise seemed ideal for a ringing. One, a thoroughbred named Aknahton, a three-year-old stallion, light sorrel in color and with four white feet, was owned by Marshall Field, the Chicago merchant; the other, a nag named Shem, was a two-year-old dark sorrel horse with two white hind legs, owned by Johnny Hastings, a well-known trainer. Aknahton and Shem were running at Eastern tracks and Barrie, after a personal inspection of both beasts, got Capone's man Tony to advance him the money to buy them.

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Paddy, assuming the role of buyer for an English turf man, closed the deals in such a way that delivery was to be taken in New York State on the afternoon of October 2, Aknahton to be picked up at Aqueduct and Shem at Belmont. Now he began to look around for a spot for the ringing.

Havre de Grace, Maryland seemed to be ideal. The only thing open, though, was the first race of the last day of the meet—October 3. That was only the day after Paddy was to pick up Aknahton and Shem in New York State, which was an over-night run from Maryland. Therefore, the only place where Paddy could fix up Aknahton to look like Shem would be in the lorry carrying the two horses from New York State to Maryland.

Late on the afternoon of October 2, while the gangsters were sending coded telegrams all over the country by way of laying the groundwork for the big kill, Paddy and a gangster chauffeur picked up the two horses. As the lorry began its trip from Long Island to Maryland—some three hundred miles—Paddy got down to work.

Aknahton and Shem were standing side by side and fastened to the head of the lorry. Paddy lit two lanterns and an oil stove and began to mix several cans of acid and dyes and bleaches on the stove. Then he bent to the task of converting Aknahton from light to dark sorrel and giving him two white hind legs instead of four white feet.

Paddy was pretty well into his work and everything was going along fine, when, near Philadelphia, the lorry hit a bad spot in the road and lurched dangerously. One of the lanterns hanging near the head of Aknahton began to swing and struck the horse a glancing blow on the forehead. Aknahton reared and lashed out with his hind feet.

One of the horse's feet hit Paddy a glancing blow in the stomach. Paddy dropped to the floor writhing in pain. He shouted for the driver of the truck pulling the lorry to stop but the rumble of the truck and the lorry were making too much noise for Paddy to be heard.

Paddy looked at his wrist watch. It was a few minutes before twelve o'clock. Then he blacked out. When he came to and looked at his watch again it was almost two. But now the pain had somewhat subsided. Paddy got up and started in with the ringing. Aknahton was still nervous. Paddy talked to the horse and stroked it and fed it sugar. Aknahton began to calm down and Paddy got on with his work.

At daylight when the lorry entered Maryland Paddy had finished his dye and bleach work. Now he got to work on the finishing touches of the ringing. Since Aknahton was three years old and Shem was only two years old Barrie's problem was to remove a year's stain from the ringer's teeth. He began to talk some more to the horse, stroke it and feed it sugar. Then he soaked a piece of cloth in a strong bleach and rubbed it over Aknahton's front teeth until he had removed the stain.

At Havre de Grace, with the ringer in a stall and the real Shem in a van, Paddy, who had downed a few Scotches to kill the lingering pain in his stomach, buzzed around in a natty new suit and wearing yellow gloves to cover his deformed fingernails. Several hours before the race, he ducked into the stall and shot the horse full of dope. Chatting with old acquaintances here and there he found out the one thing he had to know—whether Johnny Hastings would be in attendance that afternoon. Hastings wouldn't. When, then, track officials wanted somebody to identify the ringer, Paddy palmed himself off as a former employe of Hastings.

Hopped up with dope, the ringer broke fast and showed its heels to Byzantine, Mrs. Payne Whitney's favorite. It came in first, *paying 52 to 1.* The race over, Paddy pulled the old switcher-oo, getting the ringer out of there, to hide out on a farm near Laurel, and slipping the real Shem into its stall. Paddy had just thrown several buckets of warm soapy water over Shem when who appeared to offer congratulations but Maryland's Governor Albert C. Ritchie, one of the judges.

According to the Pinkertons, who later made an exhaustive study of the effects of the ringing, the Capone mob mopped up close to a million dollars on that Havre de Grace job—the biggest single killing in ringing history before or since. Paddy, however, got euchured on the deal. Paid off on the basis of a three hundred thousand dollar killing, he got thirty grand. But he was happy. He went out and bought himself a red sports car.

There's bound to be a leak about a million-dollar killing. So it wasn't surprising that word of the caper reached the ears of Jack Fitzgerald, the turf expert of *The Morning Telegraph,* bible of the racing world. Fitz promptly put the blast on the race.

Fitz's blast, Paddy knew, would arouse the suspicion of the Pinkertons, who were charged with the protection of Havre de Grace. Thus he couldn't run Aknahton as Shem again but would have to look around for another horse.

Riffling through his files, Paddy came up with a plug named Hickey, which had compiled a miserable record in the midwest. Essaying the role of an English buyer, Paddy bought Hickey from its owner and took it to the farm near Laurel. Hickey was a black horse with a white star on his forehead and now poor Aknahton changed its appearance for the second time.

Figuring that if the Pinkertons were on the trail of the Havre de Grace ringing they would never think to suspect that another job was being pulled close at hand, Paddy decided to run Aknahton at Bowie, Maryland, November 25. He pulled into Bowie in his bright red car, accompanied by a blonde.

By this time Paddy Barrie was operating with machine-like precision. The night before the race, two vans drove into Bowie. Next day, Paddy, dressed to kill, including his yellow gloves, and palming himself off as a trainer for the ex-owner of Hickey, identified the ringer. The masquerading Aknahton came in at $18.30 for $2. Immediately after the victory, Paddy got the ringer hustled out of Bowie and slipped the real Hickey into the winner's stall.

The Pinkertons, noting that the odds on the winner had dropped suddenly just before the race, got suspicious and went to the stall. There was the real Hickey, bathed in soapy water, and looking very innocent. But the Pinks, noting that the physical dimensions of this winner were strikingly similar to those of the ringer at Havre de Grace the month previously, decided that somebody had, somehow, pulled another ringing.

CAVALIER

"If I arrange a thousand dollar loan for you, Bill, could you loan me ten bucks until Saturday?"

Questioning employees and officials of Havre de Grace and Bowie, the Pinks came up with a mental picture of a flashily-dressed pint-sized Englishman wearing yellow gloves who had, when last seen, disappeared in a cloud of dust in a red sports car with a blonde at his side. The Pinks got a picture of the same man when they quizzed the previous owners of Shem and Hickey, from whom Paddy, posing as an English turf man, had purchased the horses.

But by now Paddy, who could feel heat in the next county, had faded to Mexico. Although Al Capone had by this time been convicted of income-tax evasion and sentenced to prison, Capone's boy Tony, representing the mob, was sticking with Paddy. Fixing horse races, not yet a crime, had become an increasingly attractive source of revenue to the Capones.

Poor Aknahton, who had already been rung twice, was down in Mexico with Paddy. Rung for a third time, he ran as a plug called Gailmont at Agua Caliente on New Year's Day, 1932, and came in at 12 to 1.

In Mexico Paddy met up with a blonde who had a passion for Florida. So, combining business with pleasure, Paddy rung Aknahton as Gailmont at Hialeah in February, 1932, and it came in at 10 to 1. In this race though, Aknahton, running doped up for the fourth time, injured itself and the mob destroyed it.

By now Paddy had cleaned up more than fifty grand on his ringing work and another twenty-five betting on the ringers, and was really living high off the hog. In the summer of 1932, he went up to Canada, and, on August 6, rung a fast-stepper named Volta Green as a plug named Janie G.

It was at Jamaica, Long Island in October, 1932—the very track where he had picked up Shem only a year previously for the million-dollar ringing at Havre de Grace—that Paddy Barrie came a cropper. Ringing a fast-stepper named Ragula Baddun as an inferior horse named Saintlike, he made a miscalculation in his shot of dope. The result was that the horse broke down in the middle of the race.

Paddy, standing at the rail with a blonde, grabbed the girl, hopped into his red racer, and got to hell out of there. The Pinkertons, immediately suspicious, impounded the horse and subjected it to chemical and saliva tests. Thus the doping and the ringing were detected. Snooping around, the Pinks heard about the little man wearing the yellow gloves and his precipitate departure.

Since their suspicions had first been aroused a year previously, the Pinkertons had been trying to find out just who the little fellow was. Grabbing at straws, they got in touch with Scotland Yard, inquiring if, in view of the fact that the quarry had an English accent, the Yard knew anything about a little Englishman who specialized in doping and ringing horses.

And of course The Yard did. It informed the Pinkertons that Paddy had left for Canada five years before. The Yard forwarded a picture of Paddy to the Pinks and several track employees identified it as the little man with the yellow gloves.

There was a record of Paddy's arrival in Canada but none of his departure. Thus he had entered the United States illegally. So the Pinks simply ran off copies of Paddy's photograph and sent the pictures around to every Pinkerton-protected track in the country.

Suspecting that the Pinkertons were on his trail, Paddy lay doggo for almost two years. But the old urge to start monkeying around the tracks became too strong. He went to Saratoga, New York for the races in August of 1934. One day a Pinkerton dick happened to notice a flashy red sports car parked in front of the United States Hotel. Looking up on the veranda, the dick saw Paddy Barrie sitting there, bigger than life, chatting with a blonde.

The Pinks called the cops and the cops grabbed Paddy as a man who had entered this country illegally and thus had no business being here. Paddy was wearing a money belt and when the bills therein were counted they totalled almost thirty grand. But Paddy held on to that dough. He claimed he had won it betting on races in Mexico during the two years he had been lying doggo. The Pinks thought otherwise, figuring the dough was part of Paddy's take from his fixing operations. But they couldn't prove it.

It would have taken years to round up enough witnesses to stick Paddy with fraud charges in the various States where he had fixed horses. Anyway, Uncle Sam, with a deportation warrant, was yelling the loudest for Paddy.

When Paddy knew that he was to be deported, he agreed to fill the Pinkertons in on his operations in this country. That's how the Pinks, realizing how easy it would be for another real clever fellow like Paddy to carry on in his footsteps, got busy and perfected the protective system in use at the big tracks today.

Thus it was that one day in October, 1934—seven years after he had first slipped illegally into the United States—little Paddy Barrie, aged 46, was deported to his native England. There, the Pinkerton files disclose, Paddy used part of that thirty grand in his money belt to open a London pub known, simply, as Paddy's. He settled down and became a real respectable citizen, no doubt occasionally indulging, after locking the pub up for the night, in a great big horse laugh. •

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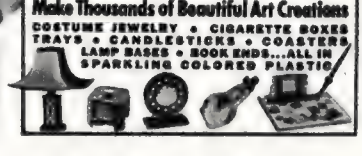

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HOUDINI OF THE FORESTS

Continued from page 23

and pockets brimful of strange instruments—is the unmistakable trademark of his profession. And as for small boys in logging towns, they'd rather grow up to be cruisers than to be firemen or policemen.

Cruisers, like Bill Eastman, have had a hand in most of the world's big timber deals. Several years ago the Northwest was taken unaware when two of British Columbia's timber giants merged—a combine likely to take its place as the world's second heftiest timber empire (biggest is Weyerhaeuser Timber Co., which grosses about $70,000,000 annually, and which owns 5% of the timberlands in both Oregon and Washington—about 2,000,000 acres). The merging companies —H. R. MacMillan Co. and Bloedel, Stewart and Welch, Ltd.—headquartered in Vancouver, B. C., operate as MacMillan and Bloedel Ltd., with assets estimated at $103,855,000.

While the merger surprised many, shrewd northwest timbermen suspected something was afoot solely because rival cruisers, working for their respective companies, had been seen sneaking in and out of each other's timber. They'd been checking to make sure that book-value assets agreed with the woods's facts. Neither company will admit to sending their private woods detectives scouting the other's timber. Yet a score of cruisers, tight-lipped and moving unobtrusively as possible, master-detectived the merger.

Timber cruising has become a top-rung, highly dangerous and rugged profession because of the complex economics of the logging industry. It is no longer profitable merely to cut *any* tree in the forest. Loggers need to know, for a given stand of timber, exactly how many logs they'll get. And not just how many, but what species—Douglas fir, spruce and hemlock. And whether logging roads can be built economically. Some trees are good only for rough sawlogs; others for highly profitable plywood; others for furniture veneers. It's the cruiser's job to stalk the forests, often for days or months on end, and to emerge with an accurate estimate not only of the total board feet a logger may expect to cut, but with a complete woods biography: the extent of disease; what type of logging equipment will do the job; how the forest can be put on a sustaining basis, yielding loggable timber year after year.

There are perhaps 50 free-lance consulting foresters like Bill Eastman cruising the forests of the Northwest. Another couple hundred are company and government cruisers. But the free-lancer is a particular species. He knows more than just the trees of the U. S. He's prepared to go anywhere: to the South and Central American jungles to scout tropical hardwoods; into Canada's paper-birched northern taiga; into the mahogany swamps of the Philippines.

And in all this, tight-lipped secrecy is the rule of the game. A few years ago a big timber outfit in Oregon wanted to lay hands on some old growth timber—virgin trees. Before making the owner an offer, the company needed to know the timber's exact value. Sending in a company cruiser would have been risky because the selling price often jumps sky-high when a company man is discovered nosing about. So, Bill Eastman was called in.

Early one cold winter day, he put on snowshoes and slipped unseen into the snowy, primeval wilderness. Like other wily cruisers, he ignored the "No Trespassing" signs as merely pieces of legalistic nonsense. Ninety-three days later he emerged, unobserved, and laid his findings on the desk of the timber company's president. Armed with this up-to-date information, the company submitted its bid —a bid far below the timber's value—and profited by a cool $250,000.

The timber's owner never once suspected that Eastman had prowled his property. But even if Eastman had been discovered, no one would have known for whom he was sleuthing, because as a free-lancer, he isn't branded with a company name.

On the other hand, he might have cruised for the owner. Primed with Eastman's confidential inventory, the owner might have been able to sell for more than his timber's worth.

No one will likely ever chronicle the behind-the-scenes deals in which timber cruisers have had a hand. These are things merely referred to offhandedly after the third round of drinks. But a few years ago when a big timber outfit suddenly laid out $4,000.000 for 100,000,000 feet of timber—the transaction based solely upon Eastman's careful sleuthing —no one in the Northwest was surprised. Not one of the company's top executives had even bothered to visit the woods. That's why they paid Bill Eastman $100 a day.

It was on that cruise that Eastman came close to death.

For fourteen days he'd kept to his solitary business, alone save for an occasional deer or rattlesnake. Then, in the forenoon of his 15th day alone in the trackless depths of Douglas fir and spruce, the unexpected struck. As it always does when a man is alone and miles from help, it came with terrifying suddenness.

Just after daybreak the wind began dandruffing litter from the fir tops. At first Eastman ignored the sprinkling of fir needles, spruce sap and twigs. They were routine in his life. Then, almost imperceptibly, the forest came ominously alive after three days of uneasy calm. The playful breezes that had skipped through the treetops, turned to a thrashing torment. Wind lashed the forest's crown, and with it came rain. The bark-littered deluge plastered the Levi's to Eastman's legs and stung his face. He was cold, soaked through, and raw-wet. Within minutes the awful cadence of the storm had caught up every growing thing in its tempo.

Eastman didn't have to be reminded that forest winds above 40 miles-an-hour could mean sudden and terrifying death. They'd found one cruiser dead on the Olympic peninsula after a 60-miler. A tree limb as big around as your arm had javelined through his chest. Wind, more than fire, is the timber cruiser's deadliest enemy.

Suddenly, as the frenzied storm unleashed, Eastman remembered a giant Douglas fir that lay toppled against a low-hanging rock bluff a few miles back. If he could reach it—. Eastman started on a dead-run for the windfall.

He raced through the forest like a broken field runner. Dodging. Side-stepping. Kneeing his way through the lashing underbrush. His caulk boots dug into rotten down-logs as he hurdled them. Once he pivoted over a log, clawed through a jungle of wet salal and bracken and pitched headlong into an entanglement of gooseberry. As he picked himself up, wet and sweating, an awesome "sssshhh" sounded behind him. He glanced around. A foot-thick fir limb quivered arrow-like from the forest floor.

But he didn't stop. He kept going. Branches stabbed at him. Wind-driven humus pounded him. The whole terrible fury of a forest gone wild seemed aimed at one thing: halting his mad race to safety. He slashed and hacked his way through dripping undergrowth until the machete's blade was bloodied with sap. The holocaust uprooted whole trees and dropped them like toothpicks around him. From the forest's crown rained down a deadly fusillade of limbs. But even the gin-crazy scream of slashing branches and the explosive, "Crack!" as oldgrowths sheared-off, were blotted out by the winds' wailing.

It must have been 30 minutes later that a solid, butt-ended wallop wrenched the machete from his grasp and sent him sprawling into a clump of devil's club. He lay there, face down, with the rain drenching over him. Maybe he was unconscious for 5 minutes. Maybe for 10. But gradually he regained his senses. He felt strength coming back into his arms. He reached out with superhuman effort and pulled himself painfully through the underbrush. Soaked, his hands criss-cut with ugly scratches, his head splitting where the limb had creased it, he crawled for the windfall's sanctuary. Another fifteen minutes passed before he slid painfully beneath the shelter. As he did, Eastman was conscious of the decaying wood's wet-rot smell and of the shrieking wind beyond. In that wonderful moment of security everything else seemed unreal, save for the old logger's bromide which throbbed through his mind, "Only damned fools are timber cruisers."

There's a wry joke circulating the Northwest—and likely it's not untrue—that a cruiser's salary fluctuates with the cost of a good casket and the expense of a

decent burial. On more occasions than Bill Eastman will admit, he's brushed death at close quarters with only silent oldgrowths as witnesses.

Eastman had been cruising the upper reaches of the Cascades late one summer, and found himself one midday working down a ravine. The going was tough. The ravine cut through a virgin stand of timber that likely hadn't heard a human footfall for half a century. He'd reached the ravine's bottom, and had vaulted from rock to rock across the shallow but swift stream that raged within steep banks. Finally, leaving the narrow, rocky beach that followed the stream, he'd started up the farther side.

There were few handholds and fewer footholds. As he climbed, boulders loosened under the tread of his caulk boots and avalanched into the stream below. He was 30-feet above the water when suddenly his foot slipped. He clawed frantically for a handhold, grabbed at a jutting root, missed, and plunged into the creek bed.

A terrible pain shot through his left leg. The knee-cap was split wide-open, impaled on a jagged rock. Fighting off pain, alone and 50 miles from the nearest habitation, he rolled free, dragged himself from the stream and collapsed in agony on the rocky beach.

When he'd regained his strength, Eastman unsheathed his hunting knife and slashed the denimed leg of his Levi's. With trembling hands he ripped the cloth to the thigh, and all but sickened at the sight of the grisly wound. An oozing mixture of blood and yellowish lubricant gurgled from an axe-deep split across the kneecap. He acted quickly with the strength of self-preservation that 20 years alone in the woods instills in a man.

He ripped his Levi's to ribbons and fashioned them into bandages. He tourniqueted above the wound, and tightly wrapped the knee. Then, summoning all his energy, he slowly, painfully, climbed the embankment. For half an hour he struggled to reach the top. When at last he was out of the ravine, he macheted a limb for a crutch. Then, keeping as much weight off the leg as possible, he limped eleven miles to a deserted cabin.

He arrived, stiff-legged and sweating, and so weak he could barely force open its door. There was a bunk—but no mattress—and a stove in the shack, nothing more.

For six days he lay abed, soaking his knee in water. He left his bunk but three times a day to scoop water from a nearby creek. By the second day his throbbing knee had swollen watermelon size, but he had no medication save for some iodine and meager first aid supplies. He was too weak to start a fire; and too weak to cut wood to keep it going. So he carefully rationed each canful of water. Half went to medicate his leg; the rest he mixed with cold rations, usually raw oatmeal. That, a few crackers and a little coffee from soluble powders, was the only food he had for nearly a week.

By the sixth day the swelling had gone down. And luckily—he'll never know why—he was able to bend the knee. He rested a few more days, then continued his cruise. A month later when he emerged from the woods he was walking without the slightest trace of a limp. A doctor marveled that he'd ever gotten out alive. So did Bill Eastman.

Adventures like these have taught Eastman to be wary—as wary as a man can be when he's miles from help and thrown solely upon his own resources. For he knows that cruisers have died alone and unaided from so ordinary an injury as a simple leg fracture.

Moreover, a slip of a hunting knife can lead to infection that gangrenes and kills while a man is still deep within a maze of forest and unable to help himself.

Cruisers have only themselves to blame for such inextricable situations. After all, what help can they expect when they wilfully slip unseen into an arboreal wilderness from which there is no return—save through their own cunning and resourcefulness? The trail which they so carefully concealed may fool human eyes—but Death is the craftiest woodsman of them all.

Usually, only a cruiser's employers know where he is, and they have only a hazy idea as to his approximate whereabouts. Even then, they likely wouldn't launch a search until he was a month overdue. Still, on the thread-bare hope that help might reach them, cruisers almost always file a kind of cruise plan estimating their date of return before setting out.

But for some, even this has not helped much. There have been a half dozen unsolved cruiser disappearances in the Northwest woods alone, and scores more in the vast solitudes of the world's forests.

One of these, the unsolved disappearance of Charlie Vanderbilt, still baffles the Northwest. In October, 1948, Vanderbilt, a veteran cruiser for the St. Regis Paper Company, was cruising with two assistants along the middle fork of the Snoqualmie River in the western Cascades. Vanderbilt, like Eastman, was a husky six-footer in the prime of life and a woodsman to the core.

"I want to make one more turn," he told his companions who'd pulled their jeep off a logging road, "I'll meet you back here in half an hour." Then Vanderbilt disappeared into the forest. That was the last anyone ever saw him.

When an hour passed and Vanderbilt hadn't returned, the others began searching. But the cruiser had simply vanished. His companions were mystified. They crossed and re-crossed a five square mile area—the only place where Vanderbilt could possibly have tracked in so short a time, particularly since he was estimating timber, and that's a slow, painstaking job. But after several days' search, they gave up. St. Regis spent more than $4,000 trying to solve the mystery. They repeatedly sent in foresters. Hundreds of volunteer searchers, including Army and Forest Service men, combed the area for miles. But no trace of Vanderbilt has ever been found.

In the spring, Eastman recruised the same timber without finding a single clue. Some fall a hunter will likely stum-

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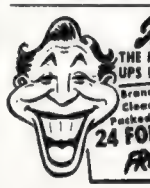

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ble upon Vanderbilt's blanched remains, just as a party of deer shooters discovered another cruiser a few years ago.

Cruisers almost never shoptalk. Once cruising deep timber for a prospective purchaser, Eastman heard the whack of a machete. He stopped and waited. A few minutes later another consulting forester slashed through the chest-high devil's club. The other guy was obviously cruising the timber for its owner. Eastman and the other forester passed within 50 feet of one another, two men alone in 25,000 acres of timber. Yet neither spoke. They didn't even nod in acknowledgment. Recalling the incident, Eastman chuckles, "I had a job to do, and so did he. At that moment we were competitors, since I was estimating the timber for the purchaser, he for the owner. If we'd talked and someone had gotten wind of it, we both could have been accused of collusion."

Eastman was referring, of course, to the rough and tumble days, right after the turn of the century, when the Oregon timber frauds screamed from every headline and when land locators—who called themselves "cruisers"—were castigated as "ornery sons of bitches." Which they most certainly were.

In those days "cruisers" were both timber estimators and brokers—an unsavory combine. The woods were full of timber land locators, styling themselves cruisers, who would locate for the gullible a "burn" or a piece of worthless ground on the representation that it was worth a green fortune.

Sometimes old-time "cruisers" worked both sides of the street simultaneously. They'd contract a joint cruise for both buyer and seller, then make a separate agreement with the buyer to hand in a low estimate. When the buyer profited handsomely from the criminally low evaluation, the "cruiser" shared the profits. That way, he often got paid three times—with a bonus thrown in for fraud.

Today's cruiser, his integrity unquestioned, is still living down these skeletons in his professional closet.

But as Bill Eastman stepped evasively into the woods one day last spring he wasn't worrying about his professional predecessors. He was more concerned with the job at hand. And before he finished, he was to experience one of those rough-and-tumble misadventures which are endemic to cruising.

A few days before a mallet-fisted, tough-hided logger had handed Eastman a top-priority assignment.

"Go on out there to that 200 acres and give me a report," the logger had said. The logger had a hunch. He knew that the timber hadn't been cruised for more than 25 years. And in all that time, the forest had been constantly growing. The logger was banking on Eastman to discover the extent of "bonus growth." Somewhere midway between that last cruise 25 years before, and Eastman's lay a huge chunk of profit. Forewarned with Eastman's cruise report, the logger planned to bid high enough to acquire the timber, yet low enough to grab the "bonus growth" profit. Of course, the timber's owner might wise up, and run a cruise of his own. That was part of the gamble. But if Eastman didn't arouse suspicion, the deal might go off without a hitch.

With only a township map, a compass and some notes made in the county engineer's office in Everett, Washington, Eastman tracked for three days through dense stands of oldgrowths—firs, hemlock and cedar. On the fourth day he came to the place where his assigned timber began. But first he had to locate the section corner, which was likely marked by a surveyor's stake and by four surrounding "witness" trees.

Part of the lore of cruising is finding that surveyor's stake and the "corner" it marks. When the U. S. General Land Office staked out the Public Domain back in the '60s, surveyors drove a 4x4 inch post at each section corner. Then they blazed four nearby trees as "witnesses." They figured the stake might rot out, but probably a couple of witness trees would survive.

Eastman unfolded a map, studied it, and took a compass bearing. "Section corner ought to be close by," he calculated aloud.

Over a little rise towered oldgrowth firs, straight, unblemished, limbless most of the way up. "Maybe 500 years old," Eastman estimated. Even after 20 years in the woods, a tinge of historian gripped him. Within perhaps 100 yards radius stood trees that were saplings when Columbus landed on Watling Island. Some had been robust teenagers when Custer died at Little Big Horn. And in all that time, the forest had been only occasionally disturbed.

A half-hour later Eastman suddenly halted. Before him towered a thick-barked oldgrowth. An ancient blaze was slashed in its bark about shoulder high. "Probably one of the four witnesses," Bill murmured, meditatively.

Again he consulted the map and from the blazed tree, paced off one chain, four links, southeast by compass. He squatted and surveyed the forest floor. Then he began to dig furiously through the 2 ft. thick mattress of humus-decaying salal, fir needles and decomposed bracken. Presently, he hit something hard. He brushed the dirt aside. There, its scribed-sides showing, was the original corner post, just as a tough-hided chainman had sledged it into the ground almost a century before. On its ax-squared faces were the corner identifying symbols.

Eastman straightened up, paced off the

"No! No! No!"

distance to the nearest oldgrowth and macheted a big "E"—his trademark—at shoulder height. Like cattle brands, no two cruisers' marks are identical.

Ahead lay 200 stoically silent, unbelievably wild acres deep-grown in ancient firs. Perhaps there were 10,000 trees and since his assignment required a 100 percent cruise, he'd inspect, measure and record every merchantable tree.

The timberland lay in a massively faulted region, where a combination of ancient earthquakes and young, swift streams had gormed deeply cut canyons. While Eastman liked the looks of the timber, he felt vaguely uneasy about the terrain. But he'd learned to accept terrain as he found it. Before this cruise was over, however, this particular terrain was to be indelibly and painfully stamped upon his memory.

With the forest's intense stillness pressing heavily upon him, Eastman paced to the first tree. The staccato of splintering wood underfoot resounded through the somnolent forest like pistol reports. As he clocked off each pace with a "tally whacker" counter that hung around his neck, the echo of his own caulked tread was eerie and unreal. When he came up to the first tree, he macheted a blaze, and laid bare the unmistakable giraffe-colored underbark of Douglas fir. He unfolded his Biltmore diameter stick, held it at arm's length against the trunk, chest high, and recorded the diameter on his waterproof tally card, "80-inches DBH" (diameter breast high).

He folded the Biltmore rule, stepped back, and surveyed the forest giant. There were no signs of bores or oozing sap, which indicate wood rot. The tree looked sound. He searched for an indication of wind shake—where storms have ruptured the growth rings—but didn't find any. "No conks," Eastman said aloud. Conks, the Achilles heel of tall timber, are festering bark sores which are alive with tree-killing spores. Spores from one wound float dust-like in the still forest air, and eventually infect other trees.

Eastman made a quick, calculated estimate: 13,000 board feet of merchantable timber. Knock off 3,000 feet for defect and breakage. That left 10,000 board feet. At $40 a 1,000, the fir was worth $400 just as it stood, unlogged. By the time an outfit put it into water at a sawmill's booming grounds, the wood would be worth $600 to $800. Sawed and finished, the lumber might fetch $1,500 retail.

Methodically, Eastman pushed on, spotting fir, hemlock and spruce on his cruise map, and recording their diameters and board feet totals on his waterproof tally card.

It was near dusk when suddenly, as Eastman approached a heavily-timbered knoll, he heard twigs snap in a brackish hollow a hundred feet to his left. He halted, both repulsed by the stench wretching up from the place, and curious as to what was causing the noise. The dank undergrowth moved and parted. A black bear, which had been gluttonizing skunk cabbage, grunted in disgust and shuttled off through the brush. Nearby stood a young fir, its bark stripped bare at the base. The tree was dying, girthed and left bleeding by constipated bears who'd sought springtime laxatives after hibernation.

Eastman chuckled to himself, "Bears can't be very smart if they pass up all these young Cascara trees and head for fir instead."

That night he made camp in a spruce thicket. The next, he bedded down in the lee of a huge fir. On the 6th day he was up before sunrise, and at work by the first faintness of dawn.

He'd worked his way into a canyon and up its eroded shale side. Below, a series of ledges stair-stepped to the stream. There were short, steep rock faces between the more level shelves. Some of the ledges were several yards wide and rotten downlogs cluttered them.

Eastman was working from ledge to ledge, goat fashion. He came to a particularly narrow place and surveyed the weathered rock face. If he could get across to the ledge on his left, he'd have smooth going to the top. He let go a netting of salal he'd grasped, crouched cautiously, and leaped across to the neighboring shelf. But in the split-second that his boots touched down on the ledge, its eroded and weathered shale crumbled away into nothingness and avalanched down the slope.

Eastman rolled with the avalanche, but though he's agile as a tumbler, he wasn't quite quick enough to break the fall. Instead, he landed hard on a downlog, his left side taking the full impact.

Eastman was knocked breathless. What's more, a stabbing pain over his lower ribs told him that he was hurt. But he didn't know how badly. Controlling his breathing, because every deep gasp brought excruciating pain, he pressed a hand over his chest. The minute he did, the pain eased slightly, and he knew the worst. He'd only broken a couple of ribs.

If it hadn't hurt so badly, Eastman would have laughed with relief. A little thing like a couple of busted ribs was getting off easy. Deliberately, and with one hand still pressed against his shattered ribs, he got slowly to his feet, sucked in his breath, and continued the job. He finished the cruise that day. Grimacing and feeling his way gingerly, he stumbled back to the car—a feat that required a good five hours.

When the Doc finished taping him, he advised, "Now damn it, stay out of the woods at least a month."

Eastman just smiled (he would have laughed, but that hurt too much). "Want to make a bet, Doc, that I'll be back in there early tomorrow?"

The Doc didn't want to bet. He knew timber cruisers. "You cruisers are nuts," he diagnosed with a shrug.

Eastman could have told the Doc about plenty of other occasions when it had taken more than a broken rib to keep him out of the woods. There was that time in Costa Rica that a foot-thick boa constrictor uncoiled from an overhanging limb; had it not been for a half dozen natives who fell savagely upon the big snake, Eastman might never have gotten out of the equatorial rainforests. Then again, he'd eluded a pack of sav-

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age wild pigs—the runty jungle variety that consider cruisers among the tastiest of morsels. And on many occasions, he'd tangled with timber rattlers and lesser-fanged woods animals. He'd outrun raging forest fires, holed up against shattering storms, but in general, there had been considerably more work than hazard.

Roughest of all, though, were weeks spent cruising the winter woods, when the snow lay deep, and when he'd camp atop three or four feet of powder snow. Then, he'd wear skis or snowshoes, and occasionally found it necessary to shoot game for food.

But most of all, Bill Eastman remembers that winter he bossed a crew of Nez Perces Indians who were helping him cruise the 1,250,000 acre Colville reservation in eastern Washington.

The Indians and a couple of cruisers had staked out in an isolated camp 14 miles from Eastman's main base. Between the base and the side camp rose a rugged, 5,000 ft. peak. It was February, and bitter cold. For weeks the temperature had hovered at 20 below and snow piled 14 feet in the draws. One day the side camp radioed an urgent message. "We're all down with mumps."

Eastman radioed back, "I bet you guys have swollen glands, it's an old winter ailment."

"It's mumps," the side camp's boss insisted, "and we need medical supplies right away."

"OK," Eastman replied. "I'll try to get through on skis." As Eastman recalls, he gathered together all the medical supplies available, which weren't many, and set out. "I had an axe, matches, a few sandwiches, and good winter clothes. I took Pepper, my German shepherd along. Pepper knew more forestry than I did. We started up the mountain at daybreak. It was foggy and the snow was deeper than I'd anticipated. Right from the first we ran into trouble. Pepper sank up to his belly in the drifts. When he was nearly exhausted, he hopped on behind my skis. I tied a rope around my waist. Pepper grabbed hold of that with his teeth and rode my skis. Going down hill this arrangement worked fairly well; going up was another story. It was 12 miles to the summit, then an easy 2 miles down to the side-camp. At least, it looked easy. I carried a 30 lb. pack, but no blankets because we expected to make the camp by mid-afternoon at the latest. But by mid-afternoon we'd run into a dense fog. Couldn't see 6 feet ahead—and there wasn't much to see anyway, except snow. It was so cold that ice formed between Pepper's toes. It cut him something awful. I'd stop every few minutes to break the ice away. I guess we were 4 or 5 miles from the side-camp, and almost up top the summit when it grew dark. We were a couple of hours off schedule—mainly because of the fog, the deep drifts, and Pepper's iced-up paws. Things got rough. I'd be skiing along on what looked like flat snow, when suddenly we'd pitch down 20 to 30 feet, the dog tumbling right after me. That's a good way to break a leg, so I decided we'd have to make camp.

We worked into a canyon, and ducked in under a snow-covered overhang. I dragged a punky log under the shelter and started a fire. But even under that rock, the snow was drifted so deep that when I took off my skis, I sank up to my armpits. Took me fifteen minutes to climb out and get back on skis. Pepper was having an awful time, too, floundering in the deep snow. The fire began to roar up, melting the snow on the overhang. It was 25-30 degrees below zero and melted snow from that ledge poured in over us. When it hit, it froze solid. Every hair on Pepper's body was an ice crystal. It was dark and bitter cold, and about eight o'clock the wind started to whip up the canyon.

It was the blackest night I've ever spent—in a lot of ways. I'd go over and stand by the fire. But while the part of my body facing the fire was soaking wet; the part away immediately froze solid. Pepper stood as close to the fire as he dared and just shook and shivered. You don't believe a dog's teeth can chatter? Well, Pepper's did—like an old-fashioned sewing machine. About mid-night coyotes began to yelp, and I think I heard the wail of a timber wolf. Pepper growled most of the night, but he didn't have strength enough to leave the fire. Toward morning I must have dozed. I woke suddenly and found my clothes afire. I rolled over in the snow and snuffed out the flames—but they'd burnt my back bad. We started out again about 3 a. m. in the fog. Musta been 20 below zero. I headed down, thinking we'd make the side camp within an hour or so. But 8 o'clock came. No camp. Then 9 o'clock.

Suddenly I crossed ski tracks! I just stood there, not wanting to believe what I saw. Apparently, since 3 a. m. we'd skied right around that mountain instead of going down; Things were getting serious now. Pepper could barely keep going. He kept sinking up to his nose. I was so weak I could hardly drag one ski after the other. But I headed down, determined somehow to get off that mountain. Another couple of hours passed. Suddenly, through the foggy gloom, I heard shouts. A few minutes later we were met by a party from the main camp. The rescue party spread out a couple of snow shoes and threw blankets over both Pepper and me. I sat there, numb with cold, and split a ham sandwich with Pepper. When we got back to camp I slept for 24 hours. Pepper threw himself at the foot of my bunk and didn't move a muscle for 3 days.

What about the "mumpy" boys at the side camp? Hell, turned out they had only swollen glands.

Yet even after adventures that pile atop one another like a sizzling stack of flapjacks—to which Eastman is partial—he's reluctant to admit he's ever had a really unpleasant experience.

"It's all the way you look at it," he declares.

The way Eastman looks at it, if you plunged from the Empire State building and lived, you ought to congratulate yourself that you took the worst in your environment—and made the best of it.

On the other hand, Eastman admits that when it comes to putting his feelings about cruising into words, another cruiser really scored the bull's eye.

"A couple of us were on a joint cruise in the dead of winter," Eastman recalls. "Snow was four or five feet deep, and we'd been caught in a blizzard, smashed at by the winds and had nearly lost our way. Finally we made camp in the lee of a cliff. It was 10 below and we were shivering and nearly frozen. We'd crawled into our sleeping bags, when my partner, an old-timer, stuck a head out of his blankets, cocked an ear toward the summit where a coyote was yelping, and murmured with a kind of reverence in his voice, 'Think of it Bill, all this *fun*, and the dopes are paying us for it!' " •

"Oh, Dear! I suppose I should have told him."

THE TRUTH ABOUT HALF-MEN

Continued from page 35

eunuch Li Lien-ying. It begged her indulgence on the grounds that he was indisposed and would not, for a short time, be able to visit her. Tzu Hsi improved rapidly, and although Li hobbled badly in his left leg thereafter, he was constantly by her side.

From this moment dated Li's ascendancy to an absolute power which has known few parallels in modern times. Ever unswerving in his devotion to the Empress, Li would not allow even death to separate them, but followed her by a few hours and by his own hand.

Kazdim Hari Bekar, chief of the Turkish Secret Police under Kemal Pasha Ataturk, sadist, killer, and degenerate, was on the other hand an example of the sinister-type castrate. Trained in debauchery in the palace of the Sultan Abdul, he graduated with honors into the service of Ataturk. Kazdim looked the part—huge in build, elephantine in stomach, with an undersized head that rose from his shoulders like an inverted U. Serried chins cascaded to his chest, and when he spoke his voice emerged in a small, shrill wheeze. Due to his palace background Kazdim knew more secrets about more people than any man in Turkey, and used every one of them to his own advantage.

Kazdim, who held his position through his abilities as procurer for the insatiable appetites of Ataturk, not only could not bear to miss an execution of one of his victims but usually carried out the sentence himself. The corpses of Kazdim's victims always turned up in the Sea of Marmara, since he fed the bodies to a well in old Stamboul Castle, the bottom of which ended in the water.

Kazdim was a "typical" eunuch, but the human body being the complicated glandular balance that it is, eunuchs cannot be counted upon to follow the rules. "Typical" characteristics include the absence of beard, the shrill, upper-register voice, and fatness about the hips. With these go a temperamental imbalance and tendencies toward hysteria. And yet many eunuchs are not fat, but lean and muscular. Neither is sexual desire always absent, but may be actually accentuated, accounting for the bitterness and ferocious sadism that sometimes characterize the type. One feature, however, *is* invariable—the voice of a castrated male child does not change at puberty. It is this phenomenon which led to the existence of those golden-throated warblers among the eunuchs—the singing castrati.

Even the names of the great eunuch singers ring like bells—Roselli, Bernacchi, Velluti, Senesino, to mention a few, and the incredible soprano, Farinelli. No singer today would dare their repertoire; for two hundred years they ruled the opera unchallenged. With their disappearance has fallen into discard an entire literature of great music, music which no living voice can now encompass.

Their story was both tragic and glittering. It began, usually, with the discovery by some singing master of a small boy with an exceptional voice. The parents of the boy would then be notified, their consent (usually delighted) obtained, and the operation performed upon the child to stay the voice where it was. If the boy was castrated very young—say, between six and ten—the voice would be a high soprano; if later, some shade of contralto. And then, in a few years, wealth and fame would be his, for no female voice could compare with the male soprano. As a performing instrument it has never been matched.

The castrati, large men though they might have been, suffered from extreme temperamental instability. At the slightest incident they were apt to go into hysterics or fainting fits and yet, oddly enough, were never described as especially effeminate. For two hundred years great castrati strode the stages, but greatest of all was Farinelli, who, of noble birth, would never have embraced the profession at all had not a horseback accident in his youth made the operation compulsory.

Farinelli would enter upon the stage, begin a note in the high soprano range, and let it swell until ". . . the sound filled all the theater, and there was a wonderful throbbing beauty in it. It was like the cry of a great lonely bird, unrequited, yearning, hopeless—yet serene." And the audience was his—applauding, screaming, adoring. Wealthy and famous after a season touring the continent, Farinelli continued on to Spain where his voice so charmed the manic-depressive King Philip that he was commissioned to remain at the court and sing exclusively for the monarch. There he rose in eminence until his power surpassed that of the Prime Minister and all Spain vied for his favor.

In 1878 Pope Leo abolished—ostensibly—castrati singers in churches, and by this time public opinion, having suffered a change, had also driven them from the stage. Nevertheless and Pope Leo notwithstanding, there is powerful evidence of castrati singing in the Vatican Choirs as late as 1920, and good reason to believe that, under the right circumstances, you might hear one now.

The practice of manufacturing eunuchs has not ceased, although now mostly confined to the Moslems of North Africa. The region around Bagirmi is especially productive of castrated boys who are sold as household servants and put to other interesting uses by their masters.

The number of eunuchs who have contributed to man's welfare is enormous. But it seems as if the world will now have to move along without any help from this strange and tragic group. •

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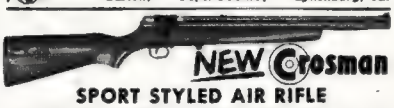

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SOUP UP YOUR CAR WITH H_2O

Continued from page 31

jockeying for right now, but let's get one other point straight: A high-compression engine doesn't need extra knock protection all the time—in fact, it *seldom* needs it. When you're cruising down the road at 60 mph, you could feed stove gas to a Cadillac without a whisper of knock! Temperatures and pressures in the cylinders are too low to cause any trouble with the throttle partly closed. It's only when you're pushing the engine hard, especially on low-speed acceleration, that you need the maximum octane—or maybe 5% of your total driving time. Anti-detonant injection units are rigged to spray in the fluid only when the throttle is near the wide-open point; under ordinary driving conditions, a gallon of the stuff will last anywhere from 400 to 700 miles. It's a pretty neat way to get real performance out of ordinary gas.

The idea of cooling an engine internally by injecting water into the cylinders is not new. In the early 1900's an Englishman named Hopkinson rigged a deal to spray water into the cylinders of big gas engines to cool hot-spots in the combustion chambers that might ignite the fuel before the spark fired. In the '20s and '30s water injection was used to control detonation in tractor engines operating on kerosene. The first serious application in the aviation field was in 1938 by the British Armstrong-Siddeley company; they experimented with a highly-supercharged aircraft engine and found they could pull a lot more power from it on a given fuel octane by injecting pure water into the manifold.

We've got a little different deal with a supercharged aircraft engine than with a simple automotive engine. The supercharger—or blower—will develop more pressure in the intake manifold at moderate altitudes than the engine itself can handle. Open the throttle flat out on a big 3,000-horsepower Pratt & Whitney radial engine when it's near ground level and, I'll clue 'ya, it'll blow up inside of fifteen seconds! The pressure developed by the supercharger starts severe detonation, a piston melts, and . . . WHAM! Even super combat fuels with a knock resistance rating of 130 octane can't take it. And yet, if you can cool the combustion chambers sufficiently under these conditions, you can open that throttle and draw an extra burst of up to 1,000 h.p. above the "maximum" rating for a couple of minutes without clobbering the parts.

Answer? Water injection, of course. This is what they did on the fighter planes during World II. It saved many a pilot's life and downed a good many enemy ships. Today aviation is using water-alcohol injection to get extra take-off power for big transport planes without having to burn expensive super-octane fuels. That four-motor Constellation you see lifting off the runway is very likely getting a boost of the jiggle-juice right where it will do the most good.

After the war, the automobile field was quick to take a cue from the fly boys. Here was a chance to use higher compression ratios and better spark timings on inexpensive commercial pump gasoline. The outlook promised more power from a given engine size and better gas mileage—which looked awfully good, especially to operators of trucks, buses, and commercial cars where fuel cost is an important item. For instance, regular pump gas rates about 85 octane and will take 7 to 1 compression ratio without excessive knock; you might get 16 miles per gallon overall from the combo. Water-alcohol injection will raise the effective octane to 100 at full throttle, permit 10 to 1 compression, and give maybe 19 mpg under the same conditions . . . plus improved acceleration. Neat, huh?

Since the war several companies have come out with anti-detonant injection units for installation on various models of automobile, truck, bus, tractor, and boat engines. The two most widely used are the Thompson "Vitameter" and the Octa-Gane "50" systems. Both units cost around $28 complete.

The Thompson deal has a little miniature carburetor that mounts either on the manifold flange just below the regular carb or on the air collar above it. The injector unit contains a float and bowl to maintain the fluid at a constant level (fed by gravity from a tank) and a diaphragm valve operated by manifold vacuum to control the flow. When the engine is under light load—and there is no need for octane boosting—the vacuum in the intake manifold is high and this keeps the injection valve closed. When the throttle is opened the vacuum drops, the valve opens, and the water-alcohol fluid is drawn into the manifold to boost the octane.

The proportion of anti-detonant fluid to gasoline, which determines the octane boost, is controlled by a metering jet in the bowl. A typical jet setting, for instance, would give a fluid flow of 1/10th the gasoline flow at full throttle—which would raise the effective octane about 10 points, and one gallon of the injection fluid would last about 500 miles under normal conditions. Thompson recommends their patented "Vitane" fluid for use with the Vitameter. This consists of 85% alcohol, 15% water, plus three cc's of Ethyl (lead) fluid per gallon. The mix has been found by careful experiment to give the best compromise between cost, octane boost, and performance boost. The Thompson Vitameter is a very efficient and effective little gimmick, for sure. One taxi fleet operator found that he saved $89 a year on each cab by using a Vitameter with a cheap 63-octane straight-run gas.

The Octa-Gane outfit works something like the Vitameter, but with one essential difference: Instead of using engine suction to draw the injection fluid into the manifold, exhaust gas pressure is used to *force* it in. Pressure is tapped from the exhaust manifold to the top of the fluid tank; when intake manifold vacuum drops at full throttle the control valve opens and the fluid is sprayed into the manifold just below the throttle in a finely-atomized fog. The amount of anti-detonant flow is controlled by an adjustable needle valve. Generally a 50-50 water-alcohol mix is recommended for the Octa-Gane. Owners have reported some substantial increases in gas mileage with the Octa-Gane when their cars have been tuned to take full advantage of it.

Which brings up a final point: Water-alcohol injection is no magic performance potion, and unless you tune your car especially for it, you're not going to get much out of the deal. Put a Vitameter on an ordinary car without any other changes and you won't notice much difference except maybe a shade more pep. Obviously, to take full advantage of the octane-boosting properties of water injection you've got to raise the octane *requirements* of your car. It's easy.

The spark timing on your Buick or Ford has been retarded several degrees from the "optimum" point at the factory to keep it from knocking too badly when the cylinders get crudded up with carbon after a couple-thousand miles. With injection you've got 100 octane on tap and won't need to worry about knock. Have your garage mechanic set your timing up 4 or 5° *ahead of the factory setting.*

And you can increase your compression ratio, too. Ordinarily this would mean severe pinging under load, but with injection you can go right up to 10 to 1 without trouble. Plane .060" off your cylinder head, or—if you want to go a little deeper—get a special high-compression head for $50 or so. These changes in spark timing and compression, when accompanied by water injection to control detonation, will do wonders for the performance of your car. One job we tested had acceleration improved an average of 18% and got 3 more MPG! Another advantage of injection is that it helps keep down carbon deposits in the cylinders through chemical action; this effect alone will aid performance a little and also tends to decrease cylinder and ring wear.

All in all, water-alcohol injection looks kind of good for the guy who wants something above average in the way of engine efficiency.

Will Detroit ever go for it? Doubtful. Detroit apparently wants their octane built into the gasoline at the refinery; we've got 96-octane available at the pump in some localities right now. It's expensive business making super-octane gas, but maybe Detroit figures it'll be cheaper than using extra attachments and special fluids to do the same job another way. •

THE FIGHT FOR OUTER SPACE

Continued from page 14

balance the giant on its flaming pillar.

Then faster, as the weight of the rocket drops with the Niagara of flames rushing from the orifice. Then, abruptly, the rocket is only a winking point of flame, climbing, heeling over majestically as it claws for the black of space, turning into the east so it will gain the advantage of the earth's rotational speed.

High above the earth, its angle of climb sharply reduced, the rocket seems to explode. With the fuel of the first booster nearly exhausted, already traveling at many thousands of miles per hour, the intermediate stage bursts into fiery life. Beyond the atmosphere, higher and faster, until the intermediate stage fuel is exhausted. The instrument-bearing progeny whips flame over its remaining booster, then races ahead with renewed velocity. Sixty seconds later the motor stops. The rocket coasts silently at a speed of more than eighteen thousand miles per hour, climbing in a great sweeping arc.

Finally it is 846 miles above the earth. It has lost speed in its battle against gravity, however, and is plunging too rapidly back toward the globe below. Gyroscopes spin, and align the rocket on the proper tangent relative to the earth's surface. At the precise moment the motor flares, builds up speed, then cuts off at a signal from the automatic timers.

With the support of its motors absent the rocket begins to fall. Balance has been achieved, however, and the missile falls in a great arc, which matches exactly the curvature of the earth. As fast as the rocket falls, the earth curves away beneath it. Gravity and centrifugal force are neatly balanced out.

The missile is no longer an earthbound rocket. It is a satellite of the earth.

Now the bank of automatic motors whine into life. The satellite's gyros spin, and turn the axis of the missile so that it remains exactly parallel to the earth's surface. Timers click. A small section of the nose cone is blasted silently free of the satellite, exposing a plastic-covered, brilliant, winking light. The timers release the catches on three small retracting doors in the satellite's nose; the spring-operated doors snap open, exposing curving television antenna.

The satellite seems to be alive. A hatch in the skin snaps outward, and hydraulic rods push the sealed scope of a television camera beyond the metal surface. Hatch doors slide open in the satellite midsection. Long hydraulic rods lift outwards, and finally three great radar dish antenna sprout from the missile like the feelers of a strange spacegoing insect.

Other doors and hatches slide or swing open, exposing banks of instruments to the vacuum of space. All but one of the automatic steps are complete. Near the satellite's stern the final hatch swings open on its springs. A lever pushes out a compact, many-times folded plastic bag, attached to the satellite by a thin wire. A small CO^2 cartridge opens, filling the bag to tremendous size. A triple vent near the wire sends a blast of gas out, and the reaction pushes the bag taut against its retaining wire.

It is an immense, brilliant-white globe. Exposed to the sun's rays, it will appear to astonished terrestrial observers like a strange, tremendously-bright light.

With the bag inflated, only the chattering instruments remain alive. The automatic timers are still; their task has been fulfilled. The satellite is a reality, and the Russians have an incredible, well-equipped, constantly transmitting scientific station nearly 350 miles beyond the earth!

There are many problems connected with the initial space satellite which involve much more than the engineering requirements of propulsion and guidance. To gain maximum use of the irrecoverable satellite, its instruments must function for as great a time as possible. Power is the key. Solar mirrors, mercury boilers, and the like, described freely as the power source of space satellites, are yet years in the future. Self-recharging batteries appear to offer a hopeful solution, but even these units are comparatively short-lived.

One answer may be the "sunlight and silicon" battery, which generates electrical power through direct visible sunlight. It has been tested successfully by Bell Laboratories. Razor-thin strips of silicon are exposed in space to the tremendous, unfiltered energy of the sun, and produce an electric current in the strips. During the periods when the satellite swings into the earth's shadow, batteries which have stored energy take over the power needs.

The satellite will be filled with banks of scientific instruments, which will record the density of interplanetary gases through a continuous solar spectrum; measure the intensity of primary cosmic radiation in space; and automatically conduct other scientific investigation. The automatically-running television camera will allow an unprecedented view of the earth's surface, affording the Soviet scientists the means to observe mass weather changes on the planet.

Tiny microphones will be scattered about the metal surface of the space laboratory. Meteor dust motes striking the penny-sized microphones, picked up by amplifiers and relayed by radio to earth, will allow the Red engineers to determine what meteor-dust problems will confront their manned spaceships.

As many as thirty-five to fifty instrument devices can be hooked to a single space-to-earth satellite radio transmitter. Each device sends out its own peculiar jumble of radio waves. In Russian receiving stations the tangle of messages is

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More than scientific acumen, however, is at stake in this troubled world of ours. The satellite is a weapon of tremendous psychological value to the Soviet Union. With the great gas bag reflecting the brilliance of the sun, it will be visible as a fleeting, fast-moving star to hundreds of millions of people across the face of the earth. Scientists and astronomers of all nations will track the Russian satellite in their radarscopes and telescopes. It will be pointed out by the Russian leaders as the evidence, for all the world to see, of Russia's great striking power.

For the satellite in its weaving orbit will cross over the lands of almost every country on earth. It will be a celestial signpost, with the hammer and sickle painted on its gleaming side.

More important, to us and to all the world, it may signify that we are losing the race of man's greatest adventure . . . the conquest of space. •

HOW THE RED ASSASSINS WORK

Continued from page 7

Russia in 1941, Nikolai tried to join the army, but his eyes were too bad. But in his dossier was the notation that he was an actor, and a good actor can display other talents in wartime than squeezing a trigger.

One afternoon a few months later, Khokhlov was called into the offices of the MVD, the secret police and terror branch of the Soviet Ministry of Interior. He was offered a job as an underground agent, and he accepted immediately.

Almost all of Western Russia was in German hands, and Khokhlov was sent into enemy territory to help organize underground resistance movements. He traveled out to Poland, up to Lithuania, down to the Ukraine contacting local terrorists, supplying them with arms and information, and relaying orders from headquarters in Moscow. Working carefully and with great precision, he directed the assassination of Nazi Gauleiter Wilhelm Kube in Minsk in 1943. Kube was blown to smithereens by a bomb placed under his bed.

Between assignments, Khokhlov studied assiduously. He learned to speak German, Roumanian, Polish, French, Portuguese. Sometimes he worked carefully for months on a job that never materialized, like the time in 1943 a project to kill German Ambassador Franz Von Papen in Turkey failed. When the war ended, there was still plenty of work for Khokhlov to do. He was outfitted with a Polish passport and sent to Poland to gather information. Then he was given the name of Stanislaw Lewandowski, a false passport, and sent to Roumania. He passed on to Austria, then to Switzerland and France, down to Portugal—each time carrying a passport and name of a citizen of that country. Most of his work was undramatic: he sent back information, organized underground Communist organizations and helped to prepare the field for future terrorist activities.

Khokhlov was skillful. But for all his efficiency and success he found himself turning sour on his job as a secret agent. "I had considered it my duty when the Soviet Union was at war," he was to explain later, with a shrug of his shoulders and an apologetic blink. "But the war ended, and I was used not only for matters of defense but for missions that had nothing to do with defense. They were dirty missions."

There was more to it than Khokhlov's own conscience and distaste for terrorism. There was his wife.

In November, 1951, he married Yanina Adamova Timashkevitch, a young woman engineer who had worked on designs for electric power stations in Moscow and Communist China. Yanina was pale and pretty with chestnut hair, gray eyes and dark eyebrows. She and Nikolai had known each other in school, then separated during the war and met again in Moscow in 1949.

Khokhlov moved into his wife's apartment, a two-room ground floor affair without bathroom. Housing conditions are pitiful in Moscow. But as an underground agent, Khokhlov was well paid—some $600 a month—and they had two fabulous luxuries: a TV set, and even more, a telephone. Less than a year later they had their only child, Alexander.

About the time their son was born, Khokhlov was called into the offices of his MVD chief, Major General Pavel Sudoplatov, and handed a new and more difficult assignment than he had ever performed: he was told to go to Paris and kill an anti-Communist Russian living there. To the amazement of everyone, he refused the order. And to his own amazement, nothing happened. His boss may have been so stunned that he accepted the decision without a word. He may have felt that his agent was unwilling to leave his family, and in a sentimental moment, did nothing. Khokhlov frankly never understood how he was able to get away with it. He never asked.

His reason for refusing the assignment had nothing to do with sentimentality. It was simply that he had had enough. "My wife helped me to understand that there was still such a thing as decency in the world," he recalled later. "She made me realize that honest people existed."

He tried to get a transfer to Switzerland for himself and his family, hoping that there he could break with the Communist regime. But his request was turned down. Khokhlov was worried. Did anyone suspect his motives? Finally, one day last October, he found himself faced with a do-or-die decision.

Captain Nikolai Khokhlov was summoned to the grim Lubianka prison, and into the foreboding headquarters of the Ninth *Otdel*, the "terror and diversion" section of the MVD. His new boss wanted to see him. He was ushered into the office of quiet, fanatical Major General Alexander Panyushkin, the former Soviet Ambassador to the United States, and now chief of the secret police. Panyushkin had new orders for him: to go to the German city of Frankfurt, in the American Zone, and kill Georgi Okolovitch, an executive of one of the most effective Russian anti-Communist organizations in Western Europe.

Khokhlov was not a man who frightens easily. But his new assignment put him into a panic. He could not refuse to carry out orders a second time without arousing suspicion. Yet he would not murder a man in cold blood. He went home and spoke to his wife, asked her for advice. Her answer was straightforward.

"I will not have an assassin as my husband," she said.

"Perhaps I could get someone else to do it instead," he suggested.

"No," she answered. "Even if yours is not the hand that strikes him down, he who directs the assassin is guilty."

They discussed a possible way out, and finally decided that the only solution for Khokhlov was to "act," to play out his murderous mission and at the last moment surrender to American authorities. There were risks of being caught, but one thing was certain: Khokhlov's surrender would mean imprisonment, even death, for his wife remaining behind. She knew that too. But her decision remained unchanged.

"Operation Rhein," as the assassination plot was called, started last November, and some of Russia's most important secret police chiefs masterminded the strategy. Colonel Lev Studnikov was the architect of the project. Major Tamara Ivanova, the only senior woman member of the MVD, held briefings with Khokhlov. General Leonid Eitingon, one of the cleverest men in the organization and the man who personally trained Leon Trotsky's assassin, worked out the details. Russian Judo champion Mikhail Kurek was on hand for physical training.

The project was minutely prepared. Not a detail was overlooked. Its careful and methodical groundwork are a revelation of Soviet secret police tactics.

It started with a preliminary trip to Germany. Under the assumed name of Captain Yegorov, Khokhlov was flown to Berlin, where he contacted two East Germans, Hans Kukowitch and Kurt Weber. Both men, in their early forties and solidly built, had long Communist his

tories behind them. Kukowitch had migrated to Germany from his native Switzerland in 1929, joined the Communist Party, fought in Spain and in the French Resistance during the war. Weber's background was similar: the Spanish Civil War and the French Underground. Weber was being paid $250 a month for his services; Kukowitch a hundred dollars less.

Neither of the Germans knew Khokhlov's real name. They called him "Josef." When they met there was little conversation between them. Together the three agents returned to Moscow, were met at the airport by a Russian army officer and whisked off to the outskirts of the city.

Here, in a one-story house surrounded by a high wall, an intense training began. The two Germans were taught Judo, practiced veering around corners in fast automobiles, brushed up on their marksmanship. They were made to memorize the map of Frankfurt and learned the face of their victim by heart from photographs. Their orders were clear and simple: "to render this man harmless." Khokhlov read up on the man he was to murder, learned details of the anti-Communist organization he headed, and was taught the use of the ingenious weapons he and his assistants would use.

Built especially for the operation, the weapons were something only a fiendishly brilliant mind could have devised. They were four tiny pistols, each less than four inches long. Two resembled miniature guns, two others were concealed in leather cigarette cases. All the weapons were fired electrically by 1½ volt flashlight batteries, and could fire three types of bullets: small lead pellets for stunning a victim, nickel-plated bullets capable of going through a 2¼-inch pine plank at a distance of 24 feet, and poisoned dum-dum slugs containing a half-gram of potassium cyanide bound in gum inserted in soft lead with sharp steel vanes projecting. The poison bullets contained enough deadly chemical to kill ten people if taken orally, a hundred if injected into the bloodstream.

The use of the cigarette-case pistol was simple. Khokhlov practiced it over and over again. He would open his pack and offer a cigarette. As the victim's hand went forward, the Soviet agent would squeeze the case slightly and a bullet would whiz out through a hollow cigarette, enter the man's hand and the poison would start to flow through his bloodstream. The entire job would be over in a matter of seconds, and the shot would make no more noise than a clap of the hands.

By mid-December, the three killers were ready to go to work. They flew back to Berlin.

Acting like two ordinary tourists on an outing, the Germans separated and went to different travel bureaus to ask about going to Vienna. They had assumed names, false passports and phony visas. And they had plenty of money. They bought tickets, got on different trains, and when they arrived in the Austrian capital, put up at separate hotels.

Khokhlov was to follow them. But suddenly and inexplicably, orders came for him to return to Moscow. He hesitated. Perhaps his secret plan for surrendering had been discovered. Perhaps his wife had given away his project. He could have fled to the Western Zones of Berlin. He chose to go back to Moscow.

Nothing was suspected. It was merely a matter of diplomacy. Operation Rhein was being delayed while Russia, France, England and the United States were holding their four-power conference in Berlin. It would have been embarrassing, the Soviets figured, if the murder of Okolovitch took place while their statesmen were talking so earnestly about peace and good-will.

When the Berlin Conference ended, Khokhlov was alerted for action again. Early in February he climbed into a Czech National Airlines plane in Moscow and flew to Vienna, where his aides were waiting. He didn't see them personally. But through couriers he passed on word to them to proceed to Zurich, Switzerland, while he went down to Italy.

Beautiful Venice is cold and wet in winter. But Khokhlov wasn't there for pleasure. He was simply pulling a classical feint to throw possible followers off his trail. He stayed in Italy for three days until a special expert sent down from Austria repaired a minor defect in his fake Swiss passport. Then he traveled up to Zurich, drew some money deposited for him in a bank there, met his cohorts and ordered them up to Frankfurt, where the murder was to take place. A few days later, in the leisurely fashion of a European businessman, he himself took the train up to Germany.

With the three men in Frankfurt, the assassination plot was ready to be played out.

At that moment, Khokhlov took his decisive step. With deliberate steps he went around to the apartment house in Inhiedener Strasse, climbed the stairs, and told Georgi Okolovitch, his intended victim, that he had come to kill him.

Okolovitch called the American authorities. Hardly an hour had passed before Khokhlov was taken in hand. Rounding up the other two men was easy. Khokhlov arranged to meet them, but U. S. agents appeared at the rendezvous instead. Weber and Kukowitch were only too happy to be relieved of their assignment, and agreed to cooperate without hesitation.

For two months afterwards, American and British intelligence authorities interrogated Khokhlov and his accomplices, and built up a file four feet high. Late last month, in a U. S. Government office in Bonn, Germany, they introduced the ex-terrorist to the Press and had him tell his story.

Speaking slowly, pausing over every word, he said, "I came here not merely to tell you of an assassination that didn't take place, but to appeal to you to save my wife—this woman who told me, 'Do not kill.' "

His appeals have gone without response, and it is doubtful that anything will come of them. By not murdering Georgi Okolovitch, Captain Nikolai Khokhlov may have been the cause of the murder of his wife and child. That is a mystery that now lies deep in Moscow, a mystery that may never be solved. •

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WE'LL GO ALL THE WAY!

Continued from page 21

It was Lopez' idea to make the change. The Cleveland manager, an easy-going citizen with no desire to make his big star unhappy, wasn't sure how Al would like it. As a result, he planned to break the news to Rosen gently.

The Indians were in Detroit last April 25 when the change was made. They were floundering around, getting nowhere fast, and Lopez was frantically trying to figure out a winning combination. The only answer he could see at the moment was to make use of Regalado's talents at third and move Rosen over to first, where neither Luke Easter nor Bill Glynn was handling the job properly.

Tony Cuccinello, Lopez' right-hand man, called Rosen over after the ball game and told him that the boss wanted to have a talk with him.

"Y'know, Al," Lopez said, "one of these days, I'd like to move you over to first base. Do you think you could do it?"

"Do you think we'd win the pennant that way?" asked Rosen.

"That's the general idea. Think about it, and maybe by the time we go east, you'll be ready to try."

"Why wait until we go east?" Rosen asked. "I'll start tomorrow."

The next day, Al played first base with a borrowed glove. After a lifetime of stopping hot shots with his chest, chin, stomach, knees, shoulders and shins—fielding never came easy to him—Rosen felt like a man in a rocking chair. He never had it so good.

From the moment Rosen went to first, both he and the ball club began going places. In the first nine games of the season, while he was still playing third base, Rosen hit one home run and batted .294. On the day he made the switch, he got three hits and drove in three runs. In the next 25 games, he socked 10 homers, batted in 40 runs and hit .404.

As Al went, so went the Indians. From May 13 to May 23, they caught fire and clicked off 11 straight victories. In that stretch, Rosen hit nine homers, piled up a .442 average and batted in more than one-quarter of the Indians' 69 runs. He also hit safely in 14 straight games, and, up to June 1, he had made only two errors at first base.

While first base was unfamiliar to Rosen, he wasn't an absolute stranger to the position. In his minor league days, he had played there a few times, and he filled in once or twice both in 1952 and 1953 at Cleveland. In each case, however, he played only a few innings.

Among baseball people, Rosen is rated as a big-timer in every respect. He's one of baseball's better-looking young men, with a firm jaw, light, blue eyes and a closely cropped head of brown hair, stylishly grey at the temples. Because of that, he looks older than he is. Al was 29 last March 1.

An easy talker, Rosen is one of baseball's most articulate men. He is a college graduate—he got his degree at the University of Miami in 1948. During the off-season, he is an investment bond salesman in Cleveland.

For years, he lived in Miami, where he grew up, although he was born in Spartansburg, South Carolina. He married the former Terry Blumberg in October of 1952, and the couple settled in Cleveland. They now own a home there, in the fashionable suburb of Shaker Heights and they intend to make it their permanent residence.

Between his baseball and his business, Rosen has become a man of very comfortable means. The Indians pay him some $45,000 a year for his services, and he'll make more before he is through. But, even in the days when he wasn't making that sort of money, Rosen was a big-timer.

In the fall of 1950, University of Miami alumni raised some money, intending to buy a car for Rosen with it. A big night was planned during the middle of the football season, with Al scheduled to be honored between the halves of a game.

A committee approached him to ask that he plan to be on hand, and the chairman told Al that they were planning on giving him a car.

"Look," Rosen replied, "don't think I don't appreciate the idea, because I do. But I'd much rather you gave the money to some worthy charity in my name. Can't I settle for a football blanket?"

So the committee turned Rosen's automobile money over to the Variety Club of Miami, and gave him the blanket. When the announcement was made over the loud speaker between the halves the night of the football game, the huge crowd roared in approval.

"I think that yell meant as much to me as anything I've ever heard," Rosen said later.

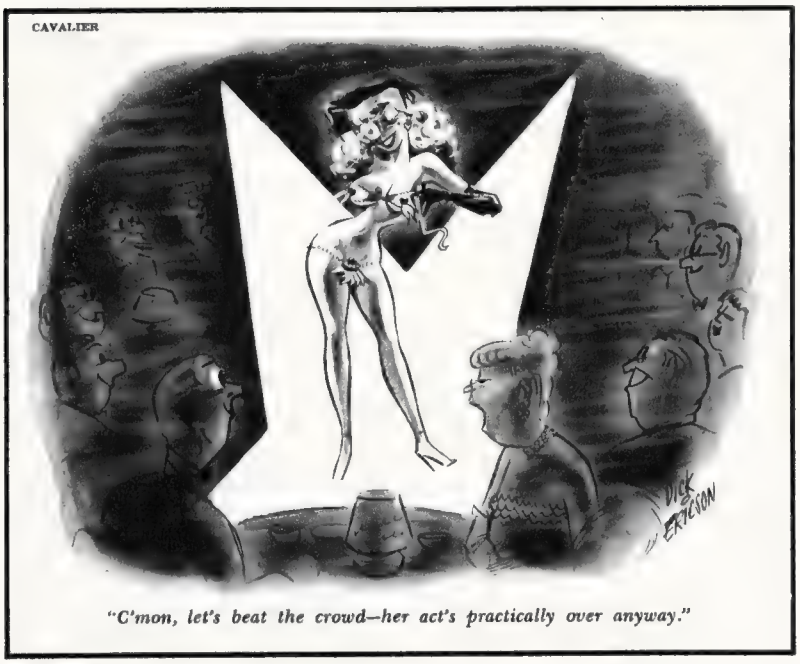
The man who can mean a pennant to Cleveland had a terrible time trying to break into baseball. He wanted to play for the Red Sox, partly because he had heard that the Boston owner, Tom Yawkey, was the most generous man in baseball, and partly because Fenway Park, the home of the Red Sox, is a paradise for right-handed power hitters. The ball park has a chummy left field fence, only 315 feet from the plate, and a man like Rosen figured to hit a lot of home runs there.

In 1942, when Rosen was 17, he went from his home in Miami to Bradenton, Fla., where the Louisville Colonels, the Red Sox farm team in the American Association, were training. Rosen didn't figure he'd make the team, but he wanted to get into the organization.

The late Herb Pennock, who was then the Red Sox farm director, liked the way he hit, and sent him to Danville, Virginia, where Boston had a Class D farm team. The manager there, Elmer Yoder, watched the awkward kid from Florida for awhile before passing judgment.

"Sonny," Yoder said, "go home. You'll never be a big leaguer."

Rosen didn't go home. Instead, he heard that Thomasville, in the North Carolina State League, needed a third baseman, and he applied for the job. Jimmy Gruzdis, the man who later developed Ed Mathews, the Milwaukee Braves' power hitter, was the Thomasville manager.



"C'mon, let's beat the crowd—her act's practically over anyway."

"Some day," Gruzdis told him, "you are going to be one of the longest hitters in baseball—but you've got a lot to learn."

It was Gruzdis who really started Rosen off on the game's glory road. He taught the kid how to pull, a trick that any ballplayer with slugging ambitions has to learn at the outset. He made Rosen take advantage of his powerful wrists, and showed the kid how to wait until the last minute before hitting the ball.

Rosen today, like Mathews and Ted Williams of the Red Sox, is what is known as a "late hitter." In other words, he does not swing until the ball is almost on top of him. When he does bring the bat around, it's with a sharp snap of his forearms and wrists.

He hit seven home runs and batted .306 at Thomasville, and then went into the army. He played no more baseball until World War II was over. When he got back, the Cleveland management, which owned Thomasville, moved him up to Pittsfield, Mass., in the old Canadian-American League.

At Pittsfield, where he played in 1946, Rosen served notice of a brilliant future. He played in 107 games, batted .323, drove in 86 runs and belted 15 homers, leading the league in practically everything. He played both first base and third, but it was the only season up to this year that he spent as much time at one position as he did at the other.

From then on, he moved up fast. In 1947, he won the Texas League triple crown, leading the league in batting, homers and runs-batted-in at Oklahoma City. A year later, he was loaned to Kansas City, the Yankees' farm club in the American Association, where he was the home run king again, hit .327 and batted in over 100 runs. The Yanks wanted to keep him, and offered the Indians a small fortune for him, but Cleveland wasn't selling. Still, even though he saw pinch-hitting service in the 1948 World Series against the Braves, Rosen had to serve another year in the minors. He played 83 games for San Diego in 1949 before he came back to the parent club to stay.

To this day, he somewhat resents the move that sent him to San Diego. "I'd been four years in the minors already," he said, "and I led every league in which I ever played in one hitting department or another. I was sick of the sticks, and felt that I was ready for the big leagues."

In 1950, he proved that he was right. By that time, the Indians' 1948 pennant winners were already beginning to break up. Keltner, their third baseman, no longer had it, and the job was open. Rosen grabbed it before anyone else had a chance. By the end of the 1950 season, he was the American League home run king. His 37 homers led the pack.

In the three years that followed, he established himself as one of the game's brightest stars, but he has suffered, with Lopez, his manager during that period, and with his veteran team-mates, in the Indians' failure to win a pennant.

Someone suggested to him that the reason might have been because the Indians got stars in their eyes when the pennants were in sight. "That I won't buy," he objected. "The reason we lost those pennants was because the Yankees won them. They fiddled around in the early stages of the race, and then always managed to win the big games. They've won five straight pennants that way."

He pointed to the 1952 season as an example. The Yanks and the Indians were battling for the pennant when Manager Casey Stengel took his club into Cleveland for a single game one Sunday in September. The Indians were a game behind. If they won over the Yanks that day, they would be tied for first place, with a good chance to taking the pennant because they were finishing the season at home, while the Yanks were still on the road.

"Only trouble was," Rosen said, mournfully, "we didn't win that game. When the Yanks left Cleveland, they were two games in front, and we never did catch up with them.

Look what happened during those years when the Red Sox were so strong—back around 1949, and even in the late 'thirties and early 'forties. The Sox were like us—always second to the Yankees. In 1949, they went into New York a game in front for a two-game series to end the season. Remember what happened? The Yankees won both games and stole the pennant. I don't think they ever got over that in Boston."

An observer asked Rosen the same question that observers have been asking ballplayers for years—what makes the Yankees click?

"They're used to winning," he replied, promptly. "They got into the habit a long time ago, and they never got out of it. You always have to remember when you play the Yanks that you have to beat them. They never beat themselves—particularly in those key games.

"The thing is, though, they can't keep winning all the time because even the Yanks aren't infallible. That's why I'm so sure we'll go all the way this time. We're a better ball club—not just a little bit better, but a great deal better."

Rosen pointed out that, even in 1953, when the Indians were second, as usual, they were just as good as the Yankees. New York beat Cleveland the first seven games in succession, and then the Indians won 11 of the next 14.

"But we lost the pennant," he said. "Still, we didn't have that great bench and we didn't have the infield strength that Regalado gives us."

Rosen would like to help Regalado and, in fact, gives the rookie tips on what to expect from opposing hitters. But when Al was asked if he tries to teach Regalado anything about fielding, he answered, with a somewhat hollow laugh, "Who am I to teach a guy how to field a ground ball?"

He could teach a lot of guys a lot of things about hitting, however. He also could give out a few tips on how to keep going in spite of an injury. Rosen has played a good deal of baseball on days when he shouldn't have put on a uniform.

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PIONEER OF DEATH

Tragedies of yesterday have a diabolical way of emerging as today's humor. Take for instance the story which is still told and retold by the few remaining Eighty-Niners of Oklahoma City's "spit 'n whittle" club. The story deals with a strange man who had an even stranger ambition—he wanted to start a graveyard in Oklahoma City.

When Indian Territory was thrown open for settlement, April 22, 1889, thousands of people swarmed together to make up Oklahoma City. From all over the nation came families of all races, creeds, and colors . . . all pouring onto this raw, inviting frontier of rich promises.

But among these teeming thousands was one lone man who wasn't interested in securing 160 acres of farm land. Nor was he concerned with going into business. He simply wanted to start a graveyard.

This odd character called himself "Rip-Rowser Bill" and it was the only name anybody ever knew for him. He was a blustering, troublesome, devil-may-care sort of fellow, almost a giant in size.

On a muddy plot of ground, where Oklahoma City's skyscrapers now stand, several men were consulting each other about the localities for starting business establishments. Suddenly, they looked up and saw the swaggering giant standing in the open field, leering insanely at them. The big fellow snarled and quickly drew both his guns.

"I'm Rip-Rowser Bill," he said, "and I've come to start a graveyard."

A sharp chill of fear ran over the prim eastern businessmen. They scattered in different directions like rabbits flushed from a bush. Later, they met at a different place to continue their transactions. But Rip-Rowser Bill appeared again, brandishing both guns and repeating his same speech. Again, the frantic merchants ran for their lives, meeting later at another location.

After playing hide-and-seek with the pistol-packing psychopath all afternoon, the frightened, disgruntled businessmen decided to give up. There was to be a meeting that night to elect a city council, so they agreed to bring up the matter of purifying the town's society—by ridding it of one Rip-Rowser Bill, who, if allowed to run loose, was apt to carry out his maniacal threat and kill somebody just to satisfy his ghoulish desire to start a graveyard.

Swearing-in ceremonies were going on when suddenly the citizens heard a bull-like rumble outside the tent. When they looked around they saw Rip-Rowser Bill staggering through the doorway, loaded down with artillery and red-eye whiskey.

"I'm Rip-Rowser Bill," the drunken giant snorted, "and I've come to start a graveyard in Oklahoma City."

Then he whipped out both pistols and started shooting up the tent. The meeting was adjourned quickly by mutual consent while everybody ran for cover.

Suddenly, the shooting stopped. After a few minutes of silence, some of the more courageous citizens ventured back to the tent. There, they found the badman with his legs hoplessly tangled in the loose ends of the tent ropes. The citizens tied him tighter.

Then they began a consultation as to what should be done with the desperado, since there was yet no jail in The Territory. Finally, they decided to put him on the midnight train and ship him to Texas.

At the Santa Fe depot, they learned that the midnight train would be three hours late. The citizens decided to go in search of a stimulant to keep out the night air. To make sure the prisoner wouldn't escape, they took him to a nearby cottonwood tree, put a new rope around his neck, threw the free end over a limb, and tied it securely about the tree trunk.

About three hours later, the citizens returned to the cottonwood tree to get their prisoner. Instead of finding Rip-Rowser Bill standing on the ground, he was dangling heavily from the end of the rope, his boot heels six inches from the earth. The new rope had shrunk in the misting rain and had strangled the prisoner to death.

According to a government specification, a plot of ground had been designated near the military reserve for cemetery space. Rip-Rowser Bill was carried to the plot of ground, and buried by lantern light. His was the first grave to be dug in this cemetery.

The unknown man had succeeded in starting a graveyard in Oklahoma City—but he had done it with his own corpse.

—Wayne D. Mote

Late last May for example, he was hit on the right hand with a line drive off the bat of Jim Rivera of the Chicago White Sox. The second finger swelled up twice its size, and he couldn't clench his fist for days. By the same token, he couldn't get a firm grip on a bat with his right hand, either.

Lopez wanted him to quit until the finger improved. Rosen wasn't interested. He played in every game, and, although the finger wasn't right for ten days, he hit three home runs during that period.

"I didn't use my right at all," he admitted, later. "I hit all three with one hand."

When they finally did get Al to hold still for an X-ray, they found he had a chipped knuckle. He was forced into a short vacation while the Indians were in the middle of a road trip. Experts looked for the club to fold with Rosen out, but they kept on winning, making their star's pennant prediction look stronger.

On June 14 Rosen reappeared in the Indian lineup as a pinch hitter. The bases were loaded when Al stepped up and he quickly cleared them with a harsh double. He also cleared up all the doubts about his hand.

During the baseball season, Rosen spends half his life studying diamond problems and the other half studying the stock market. An avid reader of the Wall Street Journal, he is one of the few ballplayers who knows what all the figures mean. A shrewd investor himself, he continues to carry on his business while in Cleveland when he has the time.

In the old days, Rosen was known as "Flip," and some people still call him that. He acquired the name on the Miami sandlots when he was growing up. He originally played softball and, as the pitcher, flipped the ball underhand.

"I suppose you could call any softball pitcher 'Flip,'" he said. "With me, the name stuck. Guys who grew up with me, and even some people in Cleveland still call me that."

Before entering the University of Miami, Rosen went a year to Florida Military Academy, which is no longer in existence, and another year to the University of Florida. He switched to Miami after returning from the service. In military school, he played basketball and football, but he gave up both after becoming a professional baseball player.

At one point in his athletic career, Rosen toyed with the idea of becoming a boxer. He boxed at Florida, and he still carries a souvenir around with him. The bridge of his nose has an unmistakable lump, earned in the days when he fooled around in the ring.

"Those days are a long distance behind me," he says now. "I can't think in terms of anything but pennants now. I've been in this game 12 years, counting the years in the service, and I'm pretty sure I've got a few good seasons left.

"And I won't be satisfied with one pennant—the one we'll win this year," he added. "We're a good ball club. I think we'll win two or three before I hang up this new first baseman's glove." •

WHITE RENEGADE

Continued from page 19

in the dark recesses of his strange mind two hundred and two words of the world's greatest literature.

It went: "I appeal to any white man to say if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry and I gave him not meat; if ever he came cold or naked and I gave him not clothing!

"During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained in his tent, an advocate of peace. Nay, such was my love for the whites that those of my own country pointed at me as they passed and said, 'Logan is the friend of the white man.' I had even thought to live with you, but for the injuries of one man. Colonel Cresap, the last spring, in cold blood and unprovoked, cut off all the relatives of Logan, not sparing even women and children. There runs not a drop of my blood in the veins of any creature. This called on me for revenge. I have sought it. I have killed many. I have fully glutted my vengeance. For my country I rejoice at the beams of peace. Yet do not harbor the thought that mine is the joy of fear. Logan never felt fear. He will not turn on his heel to save his life. Who is there to mourn for Logan? Not one."

Girty was incapable of making it up. He was, as he later said: "more Injun than Logan." But the speech had a profound effect on him, and might well have changed his whole life.

Upon his return to Fort Pitt, after the Dunmore campaign, Girty was promptly promoted to lieutenant. To him, it was the most whirling kind of success. He took the boys down to Sample's Tavern and celebrated properly: fighting a couple of newcomers, firing his flintlock down the dark, busy street, and landing in jail. It was altogether fitting, for the time.

But his success was short-lived, and his fall decisive.

After the shooting skirmishes at Lexington and Concord, war with Britain was inevitable. Patrick Henry, a loyal Virginian, replaced Dunmore, the British royal governor, and officers, including Girty, who had received their commissions during Dunmore's tenure of office were immediately relieved of their commands. Simon accepted his loss stoically, and got properly drunk. It was about this time that he began propounding his arguments about the "chicken-hearted Indians" needing white leadership. And, while his reputation as a very funny man grew by leaps and bounds, a few of the more staid citizens who caught his act found it difficult to laugh. After all, this was Simon Girty, not a barroom idiot, talking. So they had his name placed on a list of those with questionable loyalty to the colonies.

At nearby McKee's Rocks, Alexander McKee, a crafty Indian agent, was keeping a weathered eye out for just such men as Girty. McKee's job, under the British, was to act as a sort of liaison man between the settlers and the Indians. He apparently never permitted an Indian to be cheated so long as he could take care of the job himself. He already had been relieved of his duties by the colonial government, and had been placed under strict probation, when General Hamilton, Lieutenant Governor of Canada moved his headquarters to Detroit and set about threatening the Americans' western defenses.

Hamilton's move was a great break for McKee, for Detroit was scarcely a week's trek from his Ohio Valley plantation, and the heat was on. He already had informed Hamilton of Girty's importance as a scout, interpreter, and hell-raiser. And Hamilton, who was known as "the hair buyer" because he reputedly paid bonuses to Indians for white scalps, was excited by the prospect of such a recruit.

So, on March 28, Girty joined up with McKee, and, along with a Captain Mathew Elliot and a couple of others, struck out through a blistering winter storm for Detroit. They rode all the first night and the following day, keeping to the lesser known trails that led in the general direction of the British fort. They were deep in the Indian country and out of reach of pursuit before they rested. Their desertion panicked the border.

As to what actually was happening to our man Simon Girty about this time has been a matter of feuds and speculation ever since. Never, from the time he stalked out of Fort Pitt, was he again to play the role of a rollicking, brawling, border buffoon. He became, almost overnight, a man obsessed with the passion to maim or murder. Was his ultimate aim to defeat, through sheer hatred, his fellow American pioneers? Or was he simply a rough and rugged, overgrown conscienceless boy, hell-bent on wading into the big middle of trouble?

Did the cagey, politicking Alexander McKee con him into deserting the Americans? Girty maintained, with remarkably good logic, that he never deserted anything—that when he received his lieutenancy he swore allegiance to the British Crown, and never renounced it. Hence, the borderers, themselves, deserted. Or, did the well-nigh spiritual mysticism of the great Chief Logan (before Logan himself took to drink) inspire Girty with a fanatical devotion to the redmen's cause? Hardly, for when it came to killing, Girty was colorblind. Then, perhaps it was Simon Kenton, alias Butler, who later was to lay claim to tracts of land totaling an area larger than the state of Indiana, who had Girty figured right. It was the love of the wilderness, in Kenton's opinion, that sent Simon amuck, and caused him to serve the British so long and so well in the only capacity he knew—an out-and-out hell-raiser.

And the hell he raised!

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Needless to say, General Hamilton was jolly well pleased to see a man of Mister Girty's many talents walk into camp, and he immediately put Simon to work. He ordered him simply to go "rile up the Indians against the Americans," and to "use his own judgment." No civilized nation on earth would have put into writing all that those instructions implied. But Girty understood perfectly. And until the end of the Revolutionary War, at least, he worked like a man frantically fearful of losing his job. And his efficiency was never questioned. For all this he received the munificient sum of two dollars a day—officers pay—which, on some days figured less than twenty-five cents per white scalp.

Leaving Detroit, he went immediately to the Mingo village of Solomon's Town, near the headwaters of the Scioto, and with the help of the Indians built himself a strong, comfortable cabin to be used as headquarters.

Determined to make the Mingoes forget that he was, after all, a white scout, he immediately organized a scalping expedition and struck hard and bloodily at the settlements close to Fort Pitt itself, personally lifting two white scalps.

When he returned to Solomon's Town, he found his brother Jim waiting for him. Jim, too, had deserted the colonists, and gone to Detroit, and had been sent to Wapatomica to the Shawnees. He wanted to know: would Simon consent to lead the Shawnees, along with what Mingoes he could muster, on a marauding expedition into Kentucky? Simon would be delighted. This was more like it.

They were gone for several weeks, making no attacks on major forts, but burning and pillaging scores of outlying settlements. All whites, regardless of age or sex, were tomahawked or "put to the fire." Prisoners were a rarity. One thing Girty knew: the whites respected terror. They should have it. When he headed back toward Wapatomica he had a belt-load of scalps, and a woman captive. The woman he eventually turned over to the squaws for burning; but the scalps he carefully laced to willow drying hoops and hung in front of his cabin. They gave him stature, he always said, with his friends the savages.

There was a big celebration going on when he arrived back at the Shawnee town. Three Kentuckians had made a reckless raid on the Indians' horse corrals. One had escaped, one had been killed, and the other soon was to be burned alive. Girty scowled at the news, decided to talk with the captive. Maybe the fellow knew something about Boonesboro, Dan'el Boone's stronghold. What a feather in his cap, if he could manage to bring old Squire Boone himself back to Wapatomica!

Inside the council house, he was confronted by a tortured hulk of a man, who already had been blackened for the ceremony of burning.

"Set down!" Girty growled.

The man leered at him, so Girty knocked him down. Then he sat down beside him.

"Dan'el Boone send you to steal horses?" Girty asked.

The prisoner groggily shook his head.

"What's your name?"

"Simon"—the man said hoarsely—"Simon Butler."

Girty gasped. His old friend of the Dunmore Campaign! He threw his arms around Butler, as though embracing a part of his past. Then he helped him to his feet. He called the chiefs into a council. He could do that. He was Girty.

He succeeded in having Butler paroled to his custody, gave him new clothes, a horse, some tobacco, and took him back to his own cabin in Solomon's Town.

But a few days later a raiding party returned from a foray in the vicinity of Fort Henry. They had suffered heavy losses, and demanded retribution. Again Butler was sentenced to burn, but this time Girty seems to have lost interest. It was Chief Logan who intervened and had Butler taken to Detroit, where he subsequently escaped, to become one of Kentucky's most fabulous figures.

It is doubtful if Girty ever again showed mercy toward a white captive.

Late in January, with seventeen handpicked Shawnee "commandos," he set up an ambuscade between Fort Laurens and Fort McIntosh, and after killing two soldiers and wounding four others accidentally captured a mail packet containing the American plans for a major assault on the Great Lakes forts.

Girty rushed to Detroit, hoping that as a reward he would be given the equipment with which to form a major Indian army. But the British, quite rightly, contended that the Americans, with their plans known, would call the attack off. Girty despondently went back to his Indians.

If there was anything lacking now in Simon's reputation as hell-raiser, he filled it in during the summer of 1779. He became a man totally lost in his work—leading countless maurauding expeditions against the settlers of western Virginia and northern Kentucky. Hardened borderers, long accustomed to shooing off the nuisance raids of thieving redskins, unashamedly bolted for the stockades when "Girty's leadin' 'em!" was bellowed by fleeing neighbors. They were quick to learn that while, with a pig, a horse, or even a twist of tobacco, they might bribe off a band of lazy Indians, with "Girty's leadin' 'em!" only flintlocks talked. By early fall, his name was known clear to the eastern seaboard, and such questions as when he might raise a powerful savage army, or when he might strike out for the sea, became matters of fairly logical conjecture, even along Cheasapeake Bay.

Late in October, Simon learned that one David Rogers, with a force of about seventy Americans, was keelboating up from New Orleans with military supplies for Fort Pitt. With his brother George, Mathew Elliot, and a force of nearly 100 Indians, he headed down the north bank of the Ohio. Object: Massacre.

Early one morning, between the mouths of the Little Miami and the Licking Rivers, Rogers' scouts caught sight of Girty's Indians up ahead. But Girty, as a matter of Indian custom, had sent half his force into the woods to hunt, and Rogers' men underestimated their enemy's strength. Rogers landed his boats, ordered his men to spread out and advance. When Girty got the alarm, he cried out one order: "Attack!" And his warriors did, including the hunters, who closed in from the woods and drove Rogers' forces through a "sausage mill."

The battle lasted but a few minutes. Rogers, along with 42 of his men, was killed. Some few escaped; a number were captured and held for torturing.

Girty lost but two warriors!

Unfortunately for the captured Americans, Rogers' cargo included several barrels of whiskey. Again Girty led his braves, this time in a mass drunk that shook the river wilderness for miles. And that, as the Indians used to say, was what they liked about Simon—he was one of them.

"Oh, Boy! You mean a complete *check-up, Miss Devere?"*

Throughout the winter, Girty continued his small-time scalping expeditions. When spring came he was assigned to act as scout and interpreter for Captain Henry Bird, who, with a force of more than one hundred and fifty Indians, and two small howitzers, was planning to wipe out the Kentucky settlements.

They were to begin with Ruddle's Station. Girty led the force down the Maumee, from Lake Erie to the St. Joseph portage, then down the Miami and up the Ohio, where they were met with reinforcements which practically doubled their number. Warming up to what promised to be a major slaughter, Girty then scouted the way up the Licking, deep into the Kentucky country.

A few days later, Bird's howitzers blasted gapping holes in the log walls of "Ruddle's," dooming the defenders. And Girty, for some unearthly reason, was sent forward to arrange the peace terms.

Sporting a scarlet headband, Simon strode proudly from the forest and up to within yards of the stockade. Then, stepping onto a log, and placing his hands on his hips, he gave the quaking defenders a sample of "the vilest language ever to issue from the lips of mortal man," advising them in no uncertain terms that they must either surrender or be massacred.

Isaac Ruddle, in command of the Station, pleaded that the British have charge of all prisoners. Girty glibly agreed. But when the gates were swung open, he personally led the Indians in one of the goriest slaughters in border history. No reason. Just full of hell.

After most of the whites had been disposed of, the Indians, over whom Girty later contended he had lost control, went into the fields and proceeded to slaughter the livestock. This latter indiscretion brought the expedition to a premature end, for Bird had counted on the livestock to provision the army.

Back in Solomon's Town, Simon was delighted to learn that the Americans again were planning an attack on Detroit. The full spirit of the Revolution had now reached the border country. General Washington, a big Ohio Valley landowner, and known personally to most of the old border squires, was now a national hero. The least they could do for their old friend (and perhaps cut themselves in on the expected post-war land grants) would be to hand over Detroit to the new American government.

Armed with the news of the pending attack, Girty began whipping the Indians into a killing frenzy. It was while thus engaged that he rode into Lower Sandusky one afternoon and found the Wyandots enjoying the festivities that traditionally preceded a torture orgy. They had taken ten prisoners and had hit upon the novel idea of burning one prisoner a day, for ten days. Girty had arrived on the tenth day. He found an 18-year-old youth named Henry Baker, from Fort Henry (Wheeling), already blackened for the final burning.

Having witnessed the nine previous tortures, Baker was in a state of almost complete mental collapse. His condition gave Girty an idea. What better way to terrorize the good people of Wheeling Town than by turning loose in their midst this fat, bug-eyed, half-crazed local boy to babble endlessly his eyewitness account of Indian ferocity? On this reasoning, he persuaded the Wyandots to free Baker, who, by the way, lived to a happy and entirely sane old age.

Shortly thereafter, while scouting for Captain Thompson in a proposed attack on Louisville, Simon fell in with his brother George and Chief Captain Brant of the Mohawks, who had just perpetrated the infamous Lochry massacre and were heavy with loot. Having killed Lochry and most of his 100 Pennsylvanians, they considered a celebration in order. Simon required no arm-twisting.

In a drunken brawl, he pulled the suicidal boner of mistaking Captain Brant's stand-offishness for temerity and called him a coward. Brant, whose commission was genuine, was one of the finest specimens of manhood in Indiandom. He simply drew his saber and in one violent swing all but decapitated the border's most illustrious renegade.

For months, Simon lay in a state between life and death. He never completely survived the effects of the blow. His eyesight was mildly, but permanently, impaired, and the scar across his face he carried to his grave. But he had learned one lesson: never again, drunk or sober, would he question the courage of a chief.

Girty was on a spying trip back of the American lines when, early in the Spring of '82, he learned that the long-threatened American attack was on its way. However, he did not know that the attack was not to be against Detroit, but merely a "punitive expedition" against the Mingoes, who were bloodily showing their resentment against settler raids on their villages.

In a few short days, Simon so thoroughly organized an Indian army that he was personally placed in command of the Wyandots.

With Colonel William Crawford in command, the Americans left Mingo Bottom (Steubenville), and arrived June 5th on a branch of the Sandusky. In mid-afternoon of the following day, the two armies met on a rolling plain, of tall grass and scattered clumps of trees. Crawford could not believe that he was facing one of the most ferocious gatherings of Indian strength and generalship so far to have been mustered in America. But up in front of him was Captain William Caldwell and his bloodthirsty Canadian rangers, and another large force of Canadian Indians headed by the great Half-King himself; Captain Pipe and his screaming Delawares; proud old Wingenund with his Mingoes. And Simon Girty, flaunting his flaming red headband and painted for war, sitting defiantly at the head of his Wyandots. Pipe was the tactician, but it was Girty—screaming, cursing, killing—that the survivors of what came to be known as Crawford's Defeat remembered to their graves.

Two days after the battle, Simon stood with Pipe and a few chiefs and calmly watched the torturing to death of his old friend Colonel Crawford. For he had known the Colonel personally at Fort Pitt; known his daughter, and family.

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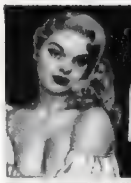

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HATCHETS FOR A LADY

It was a mild spring evening in 1875, and San Francisco's Chinatown swarmed with jabbering coolies eager to forget their labors. Most of them headed for Ross Alley, a narrow, block-long street lined with riotous bars and brothels.

Their lusty revelry was not shared by one young man, however, pushing his way through the crowds. A poor immigrant named Low Sing, he was in love with Kum Ho or Golden Peach, a pretty slave girl sold into prostitution.

Gloomy with his thoughts, Low Sing did not notice another solemn figure following him. But suddenly his agonized cry rose above the din of the Alley.

Low Sing refused to talk until some friends came to his bedside at the hospital. To them he confided that the hatchetman was Ming Long, an unsuccessful rival for Kum Ho.

Low Sing's friends were fellow members of the Suey Sing tong, one of the fraternal associations by which Chinese immigrants sought to provide their own government when they found themselves unable to understand or be understood by U.S. officials. Since Ming Long was a member of the Kwong Docks, the Suey Sing leaders decided that the Kwong Docks must be held responsible.

At midnight they posted an ultimatum on a bulletin board in Chinatown. It ordered the Kwong Docks to make suitable indemnity and apology or come to fight the Suey Sings in Ross Alley at 12 the next night.

Within two hours the Kwong Docks had posted their reply. They would fight.

Ross Alley's lanterns were dark and its houses closed the next evening. The street was deserted when the members of the contending tongs began drifting silently along opposite sides until they were lined up facing each other.

A clock tolled midnight, and a Suey Sing yelled the challenge to fight.

Within five minutes the Kwong Docks had fled in defeat. The next day leaders of the tongs held a conference, and the Kwong Docks took up a collection which they turned over to the Suey Sings. Low Sing recovered from his wounds and bought Kum Ho's freedom with the indemnity money.

So ended the first of the notorious tong wars. Following ones grew longer and bloodier, with various causes, but underlying most of them was a dispute over women.

The few female Chinese who entered the U.S. in the late 19th and early 20th century were mostly young girls, sold into slavery at four-figure prices. As inmates of brothels controlled by the various tongs, they were valuable investments well worth a fight. And as fancied by individual Chinese they were real dynamite!

One of the worst tong wars was fought over Bow Kim or Sweet Flower, a 16-year-old girl sold into bondage in Canton by her father. Shipped to San Francisco, she was bought for $3,000 by Low Hee Tong, a wealthy merchant member of the tong known as the Four Brothers Guild.

When a reform movement swept Chinatown, Bow Kim was sent to a Christian mission because Low Hee Tong had never married her. There she met and married Tchin Len, a young truck gardener, and moved to New York. The Four Brothers Guild, however, demanded that he return her to Low He Tong or pay back the $3,000. For protection Tchin Len joined the On Leong tong, but on August 15, 1909, a hired assassin from the Four Brothers Guild stabbed Bow Kim through the heart.

In the war which followed Bow Kim's murder, over 50 lives were taken and hundreds of tong members wounded.

The last tong war ended in 1929, as more and more Chinese women immigrated to the U.S. The 1940 census listed one Chinese woman to every three Chinese men.

While still in existence, the tongs operate today as peaceable social and business organizations. With enough ladies to go around, the hatchetmen have buried the hatchet.

—Richard de Brown

and had almost pitifully craved their respect. But he chatted unconcernedly while the squaws and young braves fired 23 charges of powder into the Colonel's naked body, and smiled as they cut off his old friend's ears, and gouged his roasting body with burning sticks. And when, finally, Crawford cried out to him, "For God's sake, Girty—shoot me!," Simon laughed and replied, "Me? Why I don't have a gun, Colonel." He continued watching until, at last, they scalped Crawford alive and heaped hot coals on his skull. And why? Who the hell knows?

The Crawford affair boosted tremendously Girty's prestige with the Indians, but it sickened even the British, and damned him forever with the Americans.

For several months he continued leading small raiding parties. Then, in May, 1783, he learned from a prisoner that Washington had defeated Cornwallis and that the American Revolutionary War was officially over. No longer could he kill under the guise of "war."

Saddened, he went to Detroit, and soon married Catherine Malott, a white captive and an altogether charming and devout woman of less than half his age. He asked for, and received, a small grant of land across the river from Detroit, near the town of Malden, and retired on half-pay from the British Army.

He was bitterly disappointed and revolted with all the peace talk that was going around. He felt, somehow, that he had been cheated. But, like Napoleon at Elba, he got his second try for history.

In October, 1784, The American Congress made the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, placing the Indians in the position of a defeated foreign power, and claiming for the colonies all Indian land north and west of the Ohio River. The British, now, of course, operating from the Canadian side of the border, were furious. But they could not act openly. So, they sent for Girty, and under loose British orders he again went into the American wilderness to rile up the Indians. This time, however, he had power—power obtained from the British, and consisting of almost unlimited trading goods and fine gifts.

He became a speech-maker, and in practically no time at all convinced the tribes that the Revolution had been merely a dress rehearsal for the fighting they were about to see. His words carried as far west as the Sioux Nations on the great western plains, and to the Canadian tribes as far north and west as the Rockies.

By 1790 Catherine had borne Simon two children—Ann and Thomas. But it took more than a family to make a family man out of Girty. When word came that General Josiah Harmar was mustering a major army to march against the Ohio Indians, Girty, like the man of destiny he now considered himself to be, decided that the time was ripe for forming his long-dreamed-of Indian federation.

He set up headquarters at the foot of the Maumee Rapids, a few miles up the bay from Lake Erie, and began behaving like a savage generalissimo. Everything appeared to be in his favor. His friend Blue Jacket had a Shawnee village along the Auglaize, near its junction with the

Maumee, and Captain Pipe and his Delawares were hovering in the vicinity. Tarhe The Crane and some Wyandots, and Captain Brant and his Mohawks were close at hand. Down at the Maumee's source, the great Little Turtle had established his town of Kekionggay.

And when finally Harmar brought his army into the wilderness, it was Little Turtle who cut them to bits, without so much as calling for help from the other tribes.

In December the tribes went into general council, for there was one thing certain: the Americans would return. Girty was the chief speaker, and, in all fairness, he must have been somewhat magnificent. In all the Indian tongues at his command, he harangued the chiefs into organizing, practically commanded them to send runners with appeals to the western tribes. Frantically, he plead for the fulfillment of his dream—a thousand—ten thousand—fifty thousand—a million braves to follow him against the whites.

Near the end of his final speech, he dramatically struck the war-pole with his tomahawk, and with a show of great anger lit out eastward at a dead run, calling on all braves who thirsted for white blood to follow him.

Nearly 200 of them did!

Like a great, unholy avenger, Simon led his fiery pack down the long trail to Kentucky, singling out Dunlap's Station as his objective. It was mid-winter, and cold. Near the fort, they ran onto a party of whites. Two escaped, two were killed and scalped, and one was captured.

The captive was Abner Hunt, a boy in his middle teens. Planning on his own barbarity to weaken the fort's resistance, Girty forced the boy to stand on a tree stump and shout to the defenders that he would be burned alive if they did not surrender. But Lieutenant Kingsbury, an experienced borderer, was in command, and refused to accept Girty's relayed promise of mercy.

Girty ordered Hunt to be staked to the ground, and a fire kindled around him. Soon the boy's shrieks rose above the angry blasting of rifle fire from the fort. But even in his extreme agony, the boy soon tired, and could no longer be heard.

Girty was furious. He believed that his prestige with the tribes on the Auglaize depended on his taking Dunlap's Station. So, whether by his orders or not, it was at least with his consent that the warriors took a flaming stick from the fire and shoved it into the rectum of the captive. The defenders of the fortress went to their graves, years later, still hearing the screams of young Abner Hunt.

And with the screams ringing in his own ears, Girty abandoned the siege and headed for home. Catherine was expecting a new baby, and he had promised, on the threat of her leaving him, that he would be there. He made it just in time. It was a daughter. He named her Sarah—from the Bible, he said.

George Washington personally appointed General Arthur St. Clair to crush the Ohio Indians, and the following fall St. Clair's grand army was ready to march into the wilderness.

This St. Clair was a character straight out of comic opera. Fat and gouty and a fool for rich foods and fine liquors, he allowed two hundred and fifty women to accompany his frontier army. Entertainers, he rightly called them, and there wasn't a singer or dancer in the lot.

Up on the Auglaize, a truly formidable army of fifteen hundred Indians had formed. And one—just one—white man. For Simon, as though in payment for all past services, again was to head the Wyandots. And—most wonderful of all—the Wyandots were to head the charge against St. Clair. He awaited only the word of the glamorous Tecumseh, who, with a band of wraithlike scouts, was reporting the General's every move. And back of him, when the moment came, would be the magnificent Blue Jacket, tall, straight, and dazzling in his crimson coat and red sash, heading the formidable Shawnees; and Captain Pipe, light-skinned and contemplative, at the head of the Miamis; and Captain Brant, with his Delawares. And Tahre The Crane, and his motley horde.

For Girty, this was the hour. The time to die. The time and the place. He buckled on his two, new, silver-mounted pistols, and made fast a clean, bright red headband. Fresh buckskins, that blended with the bronze shading of his scarred face. And a tall, white horse.

On the night of November third, Tecumseh sent word that St. Clair had let down his guard, and Girty moved in, trembling with the consciousness of the great savage horde behind him. The next morning, almost at the instant of dawn, backed by his shrieking Wyandots, he burst from the forest and smacked into St. Clair's militia, camped less than a quarter of a mile from the main American force.

Almost literally, Simon rode into battle with a knife in his teeth, like the Tartars of old. He tied his reins, and dropped them in front of him, and, propped on his knees, rode high and defiantly. He fired his rifle at a fleeing militiaman, then flung it spear-wise into the face of another. His Wyandots were going crazy, as he had known they would. The militiamen were slaughtered, scarcely dulling the point of the attack.

St. Clair's army was camped across the Wabash. Girty plunged his mount into the water, screaming, cursing, saving his unfired pistols. They were in the middle of the camp before the Americans knew what was happening, and by that time, Little Turtle, Blue Jacket and Tarhe The Crane were swarming in for the kill. And Tecumseh, with his privately organized attack, was bringing his kill-crazy scouts in from the Americans' rear.

Girty fired point-blank into an upraised face, and screamed his delight. They were following him! What did it matter? A thousand? Ten thousand? A million? The savages were following *him!* And the Americans were dying like flies!

All about him was the smoke and the fury of battle, the screams of the scared, wounded and dying. And the flash of guns! Often he caught glimpses of familiar white faces. For St. Clair's men mostly were Pennsylvanians, like himself. Practically neighbors.

He fired his remaining pistol into a

Polio is still a problem in 1954. This child is one of the 66,000 polio patients from past epidemics still needing help from the National Foundation. And there will be new victims in the months ahead... Here are POLIO FACTS for 1954:

PRECAUTIONS—
When polio is around—

GAMMA GLOBULIN—This gives temporary protection. The National Foundation will spend up to $19,000,000 for GG for the national stockpile in '54. Health officials will distribute it.

VACCINE—A safe and promising vaccine is being tested now. But results will not be known until 1955.

THE NATIONAL FOUNDATION FOR INFANTILE PARALYSIS

fear-drawn face, and kneed his mount about and screamed to his obedient Wyandots: "Take no prisoners! . . . . Take no prisoners!"

Women, in all stages of dress and undress, came screaming from the burning wagons, and went down under the flailing ponies' hooves. One carried a baby. She ran a short distance, threw the infant into the brush, and kept on running.

St. Clair, himself, laid up at the time with a bad attack of gout, managed after two tries to escape ingloriously on one of the wagon horses. But, as the flare of battle quickly subsided, scores of his fleeing men went down under the windmill motion of the redmen's tomahawks.

Soon a tortured quiet settled over the grisly scene, and Girty, rearing his horse to a halt in the center of the corpse-strewn field, could hardly conceal his amazement that he had not been killed.

He reloaded his pistols. His Wyandots were dismounting now, taking scalps. Presently, he saw a familiar face, peering from inside a small shelter. He dismounted and walked over to it. Major General Richard Butler, one of America's finest military leaders, lay propped on some blankets, severely wounded. Their eyes met in recognition. A warrior, clutching a blood-dripping tomahawk, came running up, glanced at Girty: Simon motioned him back. For another still moment he stared at the general. The proud, yellow epaulets, the gleaming insignia, the crumpled, bloody, but significant, uniform—all might have been his own, but— He moved his hand. The warrior leaped forward and drove his tomahawk into the general's skull.

Girty turned and led his horse across the field. A body moved, groaned. He quieted it with a pistol-blast, disdaining the scalp. Then, finally, he became conscious that the Wyandots were gathering back of him—following him, proudly, and faithfully. And he suddenly realized that he at last was a hero—to the savages —only to the savages.

Blue Jacket, Tecumseh, Little Turtle, and the others soon gathered around him. As a token of their heartfelt appreciation, they made him a personal present of all of St. Clair's shiny, brass cannon.

In the crisp morning air, steam from the warm, freshly scalped skulls rose over the battlefield like wisps of smoke from a thousand tiny campfires. Back at the main American camp, braves were crying out their discovery of St. Clair's whiskey wagons. Girty started toward them. What better way to celebrate a victory, he decided, than by getting drunk. He strode toward the wagons.

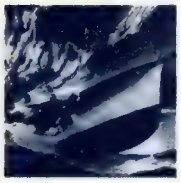
It was the following year that General "Mad Anthony" Wayne, using Girty's unclaimed cannon, soundly trounced the Indians at Fallen Timber. But Girty was not present at the time. He had ridden north for reinforcements, but when he heard the news, he came in like a prairie fire. He tried to rally the tribes. But they were turning west, and would not listen.

Simon returned to Malden, and Catherine welcomed her warrior home. But, though 53, he was still spoiling for fight. So he and Catherine separated, and he headed into Canada to live with the Mohawks. It was not until he was nearly 80 years old and no longer could bring down his own game that he returned. And Catherine, loyally, returned, too, to take care of him, for he was nearly blind.

Girty survived his first obituary. On May 7, 1814, The Missouri Gazette reported that he had been killed at the Battle of The Thames, during the War of 1812. The account treated him kindly. "He was considered an honest man," it stated, "paying his debts to the last cent, and it is known that he once sold his only horse to discharge a claim against himself. It is true that he was a perfect Indian in his manners; that his utmost felicity was centered in a keg of rum. . . ."

In the middle of February, 1818, Girty died, with Catherine sitting by his bedside. Two days later, despite a raging blizzard, friends from miles around, and from each side of the border, came to see him laid away. British soldiers ploughed through the drifts from Fort Malden to pay the last official respects of His Majesty, The King.

They lowered him into his grave. The violence of the blizzard blended with the roar of the muskets. But, "Beings it was Girty," some allowed, "there should have been a killin', just for old time's sake!" •



MEN AGAINST THE SEA

Continued from page 11

I calculated we were at least 10 miles from the mainland and drifting parallel to the shore.

But now the remaining survivors were getting away from me. They could no longer hold onto the wreckage and they were too far gone to react when I tried to keep them awake. It was fatal to doze in this cold sea. If a man fell asleep, he'd never waken.

By four a. m. only young Sachse and myself were left.

The sea had calmed, but the thing you had to fight was that alluring sense of drowsiness. It crept over you like a drug, and you'd find yourself dreaming, then you'd have to fight back upward from endless depths. You had to shake it off, or die like the others.

I knew that something had to be done quickly or I'd never keep that date with Rowena on the pier.

I crawled over to Sachse, who was nodding with his arms locked around a plank, and shook him awake. I put a piece of wood in his hands.

"Come on boy, we've got to paddle," I shouted in his ear. "Paddle, understand!"

He got the idea. And so we paddled until dawn, and we kept on paddling until the sun was high in the sky, but moving that pile of driftwood in any given direction was like trying to paddle the Queen Mary with a soup spoon! Our hands were blistered, raw. We could hardly move our arms. Whenever exhaustion forced us to rest, the cold and that deadly, creeping lethargy set in again.

All morning, planes droned overhead and we knew they were searching for us. There was still hope.

My wrist watch showed 10 a. m. when a Life Guard speed boat approached within 100 yards, then turned and roared away. I'd ripped off my shirt, tied it to a spar and was waving it overhead. They hadn't seen us.

"Well, I guess this is it," Buzz Sachse said with a wry grin. "We'll wind up now in the Aleutian Islands."

"Not for my money," I said, trying to keep the bitterness out of my voice. "I think they'll come back."

And that they did! They'd seen the wreckage, had gone in to report, and now just when we'd abandoned all hope, they came zooming back.

They came right up close, motor idling, and I recognized the Life Guard Cutter, *The Mike*. Then they were alongside.

"Could you give a couple of guys a lift?" I yelled.

"I sure can, buddy," said Lieutenant Pete Peterson.

Had we gone right in then, James Knight might never have been found. I told Capt. Peterson that there was still a chance, so we cruised around, searching. Then, miracle or not, we sighted Knight, floating low in the chilly waters and very much alive. I'd say that was sheer luck!

"What're you doin' way out here on that surf-board?" I cracked as we hauled him on deck.

"I've been paddling all night on a trip to China," he muttered with a sick grin.

Inbound on *The Mike,* hot coffee and cigarettes were absolute heaven after 18 hours of conflict with the cruel sea, and I might say that Life Guard rescue boats always carry a little medicinal stimulant for half-dead men like us. I felt good. I didn't learn until later at the hospital that my blood pressure was down to 80.

There at the hospital I also learned that neither Wiggins nor Fukanaga had made it.

Men go through war and suffering, hell and high water together—then when it is all over they part with a hand-clasp and a grin. They may never see one another again. That's the way it was with Sachse, Knight and myself—the only survivors of the ill-fated *Spare Time*. No re-union of any kind was ever held—not even a phone call was exchanged. Mankind is capable of infinite hardship, of incredible heroism and self-sacrifice, but in the casual light of day, strangely enough, the great adventure is soon forgotten.

And to this day I still don't know what caused the explosion. •

BEST-SELLING NOVEL IN THIS ISSUE

THE DESPERADO

CHAPTER ONE

BY CLIFTON ADAMS

I awoke suddenly and lay there in the darkness, listening to the rapid, far away thud of hoofbeats. The horse was traveling fast, and occasionally the rhythmic gait would falter and become uneven, then catch and come on again in the direction of the ranch house. It was a tired horse. It had been pushed hard and for too long. I could tell by the way it was running.

Pa had heard it too. I heard the bedsprings screech downstairs as he got up. Then the old wall clock began to clang monotonously. I didn't bother to count the strokes, but I knew it must be twelve o'clock. The hoofbeats were getting louder now.

I got up and pulled on my pants. I found my boots under the bed and stuffed my feet into them without bothering to light the lamp. Then, holding onto the banister, I felt my way downstairs and into the parlor.

Pa was standing at the front door, a slight breeze coming through the doorway and flapping the white cotton nightshirt against his bare legs. He was standing there peering into the darkness, holding a shotgun in the crook of his arm.

Reprint of the Gold Medal Novel, THE DESPERADO, copyright 1950 by Clifton Adams

"Tall?" he said without looking around.

"Yes, sir."

"You better get that .44 pistol out of the bureau drawer."

I said, "Yes, sir," and turned and felt my way into the downstairs bedroom that Pa and Ma used. Ma was sitting up in bed, her nightgown a white blob in the darkness and her nightcap a smaller blob above it.

"Talbert," Ma said anxiously, "what is it, son?"

"Just a rider, Ma. Nothing to worry about."

"What are you looking for there in the bureau?"

"Pa's pistol," I said. "Just in case."

She didn't say anything for a moment. But she was worried. She had been worried ever since I'd got into that scrape with the State Police down at Garner's store. But that had been a long time ago, almost six months. Anyway, I hadn't killed anybody; I'd just beaten hell out of a carpetbagger with the butt end of a Winchester. There had been a big stir about it for a while, but Pa had fixed it up with the bluebelly police for fifty head of three-year-old cattle. So I wasn't worried about that.

I said, "Rest easy, Ma. It's probably one of the neighbors. Maybe somebody's sick."

She still didn't say anything, so I went back into the parlor where Pa was. We heard the horse pull up and scamper nervously, and we knew the rider was swinging open the rail gate about two hundred yards south of the house.

Pa said, "Tall?" That's the way Pa would do when he was worrying something in his mind. He'd call your name and wait for you to answer before he'd come out and say what he was thinking.

"Yes, sir," I said.

"Tall, you haven't been up to anything, have you?"

"No, sir," I said.

I could feel Pa relax. Then he reached over and roughed up my hair, the way he used to do when I was just a kid, when he was feeling good. Pa could stand just about anything but a liar, and he knew I'd tell him the truth.

The rider was coming on now, and we could hear the horse blowing and grunting. The rider swung down at the hitching rack by our front porch and called out:

"Mr. Cameron! Tall!"

It was Ray Novak's voice. I would have known it anywhere. He was two or three years older than me, and his pa used to be town marshal in John's City, before the scalawags and turncoats came in and elected their own man. Ray was old enough to have fought a year for the Confederacy, and that set him apart from the rest of us who had been too young. Ordinarily, he was an easy-going, likable man, and the only thing I had against him was that he had been seeing a little too much of Laurin Bannerman. But that wasn't important. I knew how Laurin felt, and I knew I didn't have anything to be afraid of on that score.

Pa pushed the screen door open and stepped out on the front porch. "Ray?" he said. "Ray Novak?"

"Yes, sir," Ray said.

"Well, come on in," Pa said. "Tall, light the table lamp, will you? And see if the kitchen stove's still warm. Pull the coffee pot up on the front lid if it is."

I lit the lamp and went back to the kitchen. The fire had gone out in the stove. When I came back to the parlor, Ray was saying, "I'm afraid I can't stay, Mr. Cameron. The truth is I just stopped by to see if I could change my horse for a fresh mount. That animal of mine is about played out." He saw me then and we nodded to each other.

Ray Novak didn't look scared exactly, but he look worried. He took off his hat and ran his fingers through thick, straw-colored hair. "I played the fool down in John's City this afternoon," he said. "I let myself get suckered into a scrape with the police. I guess I'll have to get out of the country for a while, until things cool off a little."

Pa looked at him sharply. "You . . . didn't kill anybody, did you, Ray?"

Killing a state policeman in Texas, in 1869, was the same as buying a one-way ticket to a hanging. The bluebellies from the north had their own judges and juries, and their verdict was always the same.

But Ray shook his head. "It was just a fist fight," he said. "But they're pretty riled up. I was in the harness shop getting a splice made in a stirrup strap and this private cavalryman came in and started passing remarks about all the families around John's City—all the families that amounted to anything before the war. When he started on 'that damn Novak white trash that used to be town marshal,' I hit him. I busted a couple of teeth, I think. I expect a detachment of cavalry will be along pretty soon, looking for me."

Pa nodded soberly. "It was a damn fool thing to do all right," he said. "And you won't be able to fix it with the police this time. First Tall, and now you. The Yankees'll feel bound to do something about it this time."

Ray looked down at his feet and shifted uncomfortably. "Yes, sir," he said. "That's about the way I figured it. That's one reason I came by your place. If they don't find me they might get to remembering Tall and start on him again." Then he looked up at me, his big bland face as serious as a preacher's. "I'm sorry, Tall, I didn't figure to get you mixed up in it."

What the hell," I said. "The only thing I'm sorry about is that you didn't put a bullet in the bluebelly's gut."

"Tall?" Pa said.

"Yes, sir."

"Now just hold your head. Ray's right. This could be serious for both of you. We better take a little time and figure something out. Ray, have you figured on anything?"

"I thought maybe I'd go up to the panhandle for a while, sir. I've got an older brother up there that has a little spread. I could work with him through the spring gathering season and come back in the summer. That ought to be time enough to let it blow over."

Pa thought about it, standing there in his nightshirt, still holding that shotgun in the crook of his arm. "Maybe," he said. "But the panhandle isn't far enough. Tall's got an uncle down on the Brazos. You boys could stay there. I could write you a letter when it looks all right to come back."

Maybe I was still half asleep. Anyway it was coming to me what they were talking about. I said, "Just a minute, Pa. I don't aim to run. This isn't my scrape, it's Ray's."

"Tall?"

"Yes, sir," I said from force of habit.

"Now listen to me," Pa said soberly. "Pretty soon they'll be coming. When they don't find Ray they're going to be mad, and it won't take them long to remember that carpetbagger you clubbed with a rifle stock. You know what kind of a chance you'll have if the scalawags decide to bring it to court."

For a minute I didn't say anything. I knew Pa was right. If they didn't find Ray, they would be coming for me. The smart thing to do would be to get out of the country for a while. But knowing it didn't make me like it.

I liked things just the way they were. I liked it here on the ranch—being able to ride over to the Bannerman spread every day or so to see Laurin, going into John's City once a month when they held the dances in Community Hall. I liked it just fine right where I was, and I hated the idea of being chased away by a bunch of damned Yankee bluebellies and blacks who had been slaves only a few years ago. And pretty soon some of that hate began to direct itself at Ray Novak.

I looked at Ray and he knew how I was beginning to feel about it. He was sorry. But a hell of a lot of good that was going to do. He stood there shifting from one foot to the other, uncomfortably. He was a big man, and he couldn't have been more than twenty-one years old. But that didn't make him young. In this country a boy started being a man as soon as he could strap on a gun. And about the first thing a boy did, after he learned to walk, and ride, was to strap on a gun.

Before I could say what I was thinking, before Ray Novak could put his discomfort into words, Ma came out of the bedroom and stood looking at us with worried eyes. Ma was a thin, work-weary woman, not really old, but looking old. There were deep lines around her pale eyes that came from worry and trying to gouge a living from this wild land. Ma had been pretty as a girl. There were faded pictures of her in an old album that gave you an idea how she must have looked when she married Pa. The pictures showed a young girl dressed in the rather daring fashion of the day—those low-cut dresses that all the great ladies of the Confederacy used to wear with such a casual air, as they sat queenlike, smiling and pouring tea from silver pots into delicate china cups. It was hard to believe that Ma had been one of those great ladies once. Her father had been a rich tobacco buyer in Virginia, but he lost everything in the war and died soon afterward.

I never saw Virginia myself. And those pictures in the album were just pictures to me, but I guess Pa still saw her as she had looked then, because something happened to him every time he looked at her. His wind-reddened face softened and his stern eyes became gentle—even as they did now as he saw her standing in the doorway.

She stood there, holding her cotton wrap-around together, smiling quickly at Ray.

"Good evening, Ray," she said.

"Good evening, Mrs. Cameron," Ray said uneasily.

"Mother," Pa said, "why don't you go back to bed? I'll be along in a few minutes."

But she shook her head. "I want to know what it's about. Tell me, Rodger, because I'll find out sooner or later."

"It's nothing serious," Pa said gently. "Ray just had some trouble in John's City with the state police. It's nothing to worry about."

"I don't understand," Ma said vaguely. "What has that to do with Talbert?"

"I just think it's best if they both go away for a while, until it blows over. There's been no killing. Just a fist fight. But there's no telling what the Yankee troopers will do while they're riled up. I'll send Ray and Tall down to my brother's place on the Brazos. You know how the police shift from one place to another. In a few months there won't be anybody around John's City to remember or hold a grudge, and then they can come back."

She considered it carefully, but I knew she wouldn't question Pa's word. That's the way it always had been.

"All right, Rodger," she said at last. "Whatever you say."

Her voice was heavy and edged with hopelessness. She had had great plans for me. Even before I was born she had started making plans to send me to the University of Virginia and make a lawyer out of me, or maybe a preacher. But the war had put an end to that. There wasn't anybody in Texas, except the scalawags and bureau agents, that had money enough to send their children off

Tall was forked lightning on the draw and he'd never learned how to duck a fight.

So he kept killing and killing—until every reward-hungry lawman and reputation-crazy gunslinger in the Southwest were hunting him.

to places like Virginia. And I hadn't made things any easier for Ma. I had come into the world in the midst of great pain, almost killing her, and I had been a source of pain ever since.

I said, "It's going to be all right, Ma. We'll just put in the spring working, and come home in the summer."

For a moment I forgot that I didn't want to leave the John's City country, that I didn't want to go away from Laurin, that I was mad at Ray Novak for bringing all this on. I wanted to see Ma smile more than anything else.

And she did, finally, but it was weak, not reaching her eyes. She said, "Of course, son. Will you be going . . . right away?"

I looked at Pa and he nodded. "Yes," he said. "Right away."

Ma went into the kitchen and we heard her shaking the grate on the cookstove. Pa said, "Ray, did you come by your pa's place?"

"No, sir," Ray said. "I figured that would be the first place the posse would look for me."

Pa nodded soberly. "You did right. I'll go over and let him know that you're all right. I'll do it tomorrow."

"I'd be much obliged, sir."

Pa went into the bedroom and put on his pants and boots. He came out stuffing his nightshirt in his pants. Without saying anything, he handed me a cartridge belt with an open holster attached to it. I buckled the belt on and he slid the .44 into the holster, then I went upstairs to change my own nightshirt for a regular shirt and a mackinaw.

The whole thing struck me as something out of a dream. Only a few minutes ago I had been sound asleep, with not a worry in the world, unless maybe it was figuring out a way to see Laurin more often. And now I was getting ready to leave. Going down on the Brazos to a strange country that I had never seen before. Just because Ray Novack lost his fool head and hit a Yankee cavalryman.

I heard the front door open and close, and there was a thud of boots and a bright sound of spurs as Pa and Ray went out to the barn to get the horses ready. There was a familiar stirring sound downstairs, wooden spoon against crock bowl, and I knew Ma was mixing a batter of some kind. Ma was like most women. In case of death or any other disaster, her first thought was of food. The women themselves never eat the food, but cooking gives them something to do. It takes their minds off their troubles. Maybe it's the same as a man getting drunk to forget his troubles. A woman cooks. Anyway, I knew Ray and I wouldn't go hungry on our trip to the Brazos.

I went downstairs and outside, and the night was as clean and sharp as a new knife. I stood out there for a few minutes, in the yard, looking to the west where the Bannerman spread was. I thought about Laurin. I let myself wonder if Laurin would miss me. If she would miss Ray Novak—even a little bit. Damn Ray Novak, anyway.

Pa and Ray were working quietly in the barn, in the sickly orange light of an oil lantern. Pa had cut out two horses from the holding corral, and I saw immediately that one of them was the big copper-colored gelding that was registered in the horse book as Red Hawk. But he was just "Red" to me, and beautiful as only a pure bred Morgan can be. Ray was throwing a saddle up on a sturdy little black and Pa was taking care of Red, patting him gently and crooning into his nervous pointed little ears.

I came up and slapped Red on his smooth glossy rump and he switched his fine head around and glared at me with a caustic eye. Red was bigger than most Morgans, almost sixteen hands high and king every inch of the way. The extra height was most in his hard-muscled legs, which gave him speed. A barrel chest and a heart as big as Texas gave him the stamina to do a hard day's work and not complain, although he had been bred as a show horse. An Eastern pilgrim had brought him down from Vermont or Massachusetts or somewhere two summers ago when the horse had been a two-year-old, and it had been love at first sight between Red and Pa. Pa had bought him on the spot, and Ma and me still didn't know what Red cost.

Pa looked up at me as he tightened the cinch under Red's belly. "I guess Red will get you to Brazos country," he said, "and get you back again."

I didn't know what to say. I knew how Pa felt about that blueblood, and there were other horses on the place that would do just as well for me. But I found the good sense to keep my mouth shut. Pa was giving Red to me and he wanted to do it his own way.

After a while, Ma came out with some things for me done up in a blanket roll, and she had a grub sack filled with coffee and bacon and meal and salt and some fresh-cooked cornbread. And there was a small deep skillet done up in the blanket roll. I couldn't help grinning a little. It was more like getting ready for a picnic or a camp meeting than making a cross-country run with a posse on our tails.

I said, "Thanks, Ma. Now don't you worry." Then I kissed her cheek, and her skin was dry and rough against my lips. Her eyes were wide—a little too wide, and liquid-looking, but not a tear spilled out. She would wait until I was gone for that. I swung up on Red and Pa handed up a sealed white envelope.

"This is for your Uncle George Cameron," he said quietly. "Give it to him when you get to the ranch. It tells him who you are and asks him to give both of you a job of work through the spring season. It doesn't say anything about the police trouble. I don't figure there's any use worrying him about that."

He stopped and raked his fingers through his thinning hair. Pa had been a handsome man not many years before, and part of that handsomeness could still be seen. Men hold up better than women in this country. But he looked tired and old as he reached up to shake hands with me. Most of the age was in his eyes.

"Good-by, Tall. Be careful of yourself."

"Sure, Pa."

"Do you think you can find the place all right?"

"We can't miss the Brazos if we ride east," I said. "We'll head south and then ask questions if we still think we have to."

He nodded. "I guess that's about right. Good-by, Ray. I'll let your pa know."

"Good-by, sir. Thank you."

We sat there for a minute, wondering if there was anything else to say. Then we all began to hear the noise of complex rattle and movement. For an instant I listened and looked at Ray Novak. He was thinking the same as I was. There was a rattle of loose steel and the aching screech of saddle leather, all muted and deadened by night and the distance. Then came the thudding of regimented horses, and we didn't have to be told that they were cavalry horses.

And still we sat there as the sound of horses and the rattle of cavalry sabers got closer. And I thought grimly, "They sure as hell didn't waste time!" Then I raked Red with the blunted rowels of my spurs, and we jumped out of the barn and into the darkness, with Ray Novak right behind.

The detachment of troopers saw us, or heard us. Somebody, an officer probably, bellowed out, "Halt! In the name of the United States Army!"

I sunk the steel to Red and we jumped out a full length in front of Ray and the black. The cavalry recovered quickly and there were more bellowed orders in the darkness. Then they were coming after us, at full *charge*, from the way it sounded.

CHAPTER TWO

It's fine to feel a horse like Red under you. I bent over his neck and felt the long hard muscles along his shoulders as he began to stretch out in a long, flowing, ground-eating stride. Then the cavalry started shooting, but that didn't worry me much. They couldn't hit anything in the darkness unless somebody got pretty lucky. And Ray and I had one advantage over them. We knew the country.

We headed south first, toward some low rolling hills where the mesquite and scrub oak was so thick that it was hard to get through, even in the daytime, if you didn't know your way around. Red was running like a well-oiled machine now, and Ray's black horse was about two jumps behind us. The black was a good horse, but he was used mostly for cutting cattle and I knew he wouldn't hold up at the pace we were going for more than a half a mile. So I turned in the saddle and yelled back at Ray Novak.

"We'll head for the arroyo and take Daggert's Road to the east!"

Ray yelled something, but the wind snatched the words away before they got to me. Anyway, I figured he understood. It was the natural thing to do if you knew the country, and Ray knew it as well as I did. We went barreling across the flatland, pulling away from the cavalry a little, but not enough to get lost. And then we blasted into the hills, into the dagger-thorned chaparral and clawlike scrub oaks that grew as thick as weeds. In the pale moonlight, we were able to look for familiar trails and find them, but I hated to think what Red's glossy coat was going to look like when we came out of it.

The cavalry made up some lost time as we thrashed our way through the brush. They were coming into shooting range again, they had their carbines out now, pumping lead in our general direction, and I began to be afraid that somebody was going to get lucky after all if they kept that up for long.

But we blasted our way through the brush and went barreling down the slope again toward the ugly dark gash in the land below us, the arroyo. The spring rains hadn't come yet, so the sandy weed-grown bed was still dry as we slid our horses down the steep bank. The shooting had stopped again. I figured the cavalry had hit the brush and was having its hands full there. So we pounded on down the dry wash and finally we came to what we were looking for, a cutaway in the bank of the wash, only you had to know where it was to see it, especially at night. It was grown over with weeds and scrub trees, and it stayed that way the year around except for maybe two months in the spring when the rains up north sent the wash to flowing.

That was Daggert's Road. If you knew where to look, there was room enough to squeeze a horse through the opening through the hanging vines and scrubs, and you entered into a kind of a trail that wound up into the hill country. If you followed the trail far enough you'd find a little lean-to shack against a hillside, falling to pieces and rotten with years. Old-timers would tell you that shack used to be Sam Daggert's headquarters, that he used to hide out there after making one of his raids on the wagon trains crossing the Santa Fe Trail.

I don't know about the Sam Daggert part, but I know the cabin is there, and somebody must have made that trail for some reason. I used to ride out this way with Pa sometimes, looking for strays. And, kidlike, I would poke around the shack looking for buried treasure, or maybe skeletons or guns. But all I ever found was a few soggy, blackened bits of paper that might have been paper cartridges at one time.

Well, Sam Daggert or not, whoever made the trail, I was grateful to them. Ray Novak was first to go through the opening because his black was smaller than Red. Then I shoved Red through, and took a minute to rearrange the vines. We could hear the cavalry just beginning to jump their horses down the bank of the wash.

We waited where we were until they pounded past us, running south in the bed of the arroyo. And for a minute there I felt pretty good about it. I was pretty pleased with myself. I wasn't scared, for one thing, and hadn't been, through the whole business. And I don't think it had entered my mind that the cavalry would catch us, and even if they had caught us, they couldn't have done anything.

It wasn't cockiness exactly. It was training. One Texan was better than a whole damned regiment of bluebelly Yankees. I was as sure of that as I was sure the sun would come up the next morning. The War between the States hadn't changed that. So that was the way I thought. Only it wasn't thinking, it was knowing, and for a few minutes there I didn't hate Ray Novak for getting me into this mess, because I was enjoying myself.

But not Ray. His face was whiter than the pale moonlight that sifted through the brush. He wiped his face on his shirt sleeve and looked at me, and Red, and then at his own black horse, as if he was surprised to see that we were still in one piece.

He said finally, "I guess I didn't bargain for a thing like this."

"For a thing like what?"

"I didn't figure they'd be so worked up. You'd think I'd killed somebody, from the way they came after us."

I couldn't figure Ray Novak out. He acted scared, but I knew he wasn't—or at least I'd never known him to be scared of anything before. He sat there, looking at me with those sober eyes of his, and wiping his face. "I don't like it at all."

"For God's sake," I said, "what don't you like about it? We got away from them, didn't we?"

He didn't say anything, so I pulled Red around and nudged him forward, heading north. I could almost feel Ray stiffen in surprise.

"Now where are you going? I had an idea we were headed west."

I said, "We're going away, aren't we? That's the time for saying good-by, isn't it?"

He knew I was headed for the Bannerman spread to see Laurin before starting the long ride to the Brazos. I half expected him to go on without me. At least, I expected an argument of some kind, but strangely enough he didn't offer any. He reined the black over and fell in beside me.

The Bannerman ranch house was dark when we got there, but it wasn't long before we saw somebody light a lamp and come out on the front porch. It was Joe Bannerman, Laurin's brother, holding a big hog-leg six-shooter in one hand and the lamp in the other.

Before he decided to shoot first and ask questions later, I called, "It's me, Joe—Tall Cameron. Ray Novak's here with me."

I heard him grunt in surprise as Ray and I swung around the hitching rack in the front yard, making for the back of the house.

I said, "Blow the lamp out, Joe. The cavalry's after us. I don't think they're anywhere close, but there's no use taking chances."

"What the hell have you got yourself into now?" he said. He sounded half mad at being jarred out of bed at that time of night. But the lamp went out and he padded barefoot to the end of the porch, peering at us through the darkness. "Ray Novak, is that you?" Then we heard him spit in the darkness. "Has this young heller got you mixed up in some of his shenanigans?"

Joe never liked me much. He was a lot older than Laurin, and I knew he never liked it much when I came calling. But to hell with Joe Bannerman. Laurin was the one I'd come to say good-by to.

"It's me, all right, Joe," Ray Novak said, "but the trouble we're in is my fault. Tall didn't have anything to do with it."

For a moment, Joe didn't say anything. Then, "Well, I'll be damned. . . ."

Ray started explaining about his fight with the bluebelly back in John's City, but I didn't stay to hear about it. Just then I saw her standing there at the back door. I dropped down from the saddle and gave Red a slap on the rump, sending him on around to the back of the house.

"Tall?"

She looked like a pale ghost, or an angel, standing there in the darkness. Her voice was anxious, touched with fear. Then she pushed the screen door open and came outside. She stood there on the top step, covered in one of those pale, shapeless wraparounds that all women seem to reach for when they get out of bed. I had never seen her like that before. In the pale moonlight, her face seemed even more beautiful than I had remembered it, and her dark hair was unbraided, falling around her shoulders as soft as a dark mist. I stood there at the bottom of the steps, looking up at her.

"Tall," she said urgently, "something's wrong. You wouldn't be here at this time of night unless . . ."

"It's nothing," I said. "We're going down on the Brazos for a spell. I wanted to say good-by, that's all."

"We?" I don't think she had known there were two of us until then.

"Me and Ray Novak," I said. "He took a swing at a bluebelly and got the cavalry on him. Now they're after both of us. . . ."

She made a startled little sound, and I wanted to reach up and put my arms around her and tell her not to worry. I'd be back. All the bluebellies north of the Rio Grande couldn't keep me away from her.

But I didn't move. Joe Bannerman would have shot me in a minute if he had caught me laying a hand on his sister while she

was still in her nightclothes. And probably that was just what Joe was expecting. He moved around to the corner of the house, still talking to Ray Novak, but careful not to let me out of his sight.

She lowered her voice, but the worry and urgency was still there. "Tall, are you sure. . . . Are you sure that you haven't . . . done anything?"

That would have made me mad if it had been anybody else. Nobody seemed to believe me when I told them that Ray Novak was the one that started all the trouble. They seemed to think that Ray Novak was incapable of getting into any trouble, especially on the wrong side of the law. With Tall Cameron, that was the thing they seemed to expect.

But I couldn't get mad at Laurin. I said, "Don't worry about me. We'll put in a spell on the Brazos, until things settle down, and then I'll be coming back. Don't forget that. I'll be back."

At last she seemed to believe me. She smiled faintly and started to come down the steps, but a sullen grunt from her brother stopped her.

Damn Joe Bannerman, anyway. And Ray Novak. This was a hell of a way for a man to say good-by to his best girl. His only girl. I heard a rustling around inside the house, and then a match flared and lighted a lamp-wick. That would be old man Bannerman coming out to see what the fuss was about, and I didn't feel like I wanted to go through the whole rigamarole again, explaining that we were in trouble and it was Ray who started it and not me.

Ray Novak called, "We'd better be riding, Tall."

I knew he was right. There was no sense in staying here and letting the bluebellies finally stumble on us.

I was standing there, feeling helpless. One moment Laurin's face was quiet and composed, and the next moment it began to break up around her eyes. Then, somehow, she was in my arms.

"Laurin!" Joe Bannerman roared, "for God's, sake, haven't you got any decency?"

The moment was over almost before I knew she was there. But I felt better. I had held her in my arms for that short moment, and that was something they couldn't take away from me. It was something I could remember for the month, or six months, or whatever length of time we had to be apart.

She had jumped back, startled at her brother's bellowing. Then the back door opened again and the old man came out, and the lamplight splashed around until it seemed to me that the cavalry couldn't miss seeing it, no matter where they were. I knew it was time to start riding.

I got Red and led him around to the corner of the house. Ray Novak was already in the saddle, waiting for me. So I swung up, too.

Laurin's face was cameo-soft and pale in the lamplight, and that was the way I remembered it.

"Take care of yourself, Tall. Don't . . . let anything happen."

"Don't worry. There's nothing to worry about."

"Will I hear from you?"

"Sure. Anyway, I'll be back before you know it."

Ray Novak was sitting his horse impassively. Nothing showed on his face, but I could guess at what was happening inside him. All the time we had been here, Laurin hadn't even looked at him. Only when we reined our horses around to leave did she say:

"Good-by, Ray."

And he said, "Good-by, Laurin." And we rode out of the yard. I looked back once and she was still standing there by the steps, pale and beautiful in the flickering light from the oil lamp, and I realized what a lucky guy I really was. I could even afford to feel sorry for Ray Novak.

We rode east for what must have been two hours. I figured the Yankees would be so lost by now that they would be lucky to find their way home. And, as we put distance between us and John's City, I did some thinking about Ray Novak, trying to figure out what had got into him back there at Daggert's Road.

I added together all the things I knew about him and was a little surprised when it didn't come to much. The Novak ranch had been next to ours for as long as I could remember, and I had known him all that time, or thought I had known him. We had gone to Professor Bigloe's Academy together—a hell of a fancy name, I thought, for a school that held classes three times a week in the smelly parlor of Ma Simpson's boarding house, but it was the only school anywhere near John's City, and it was considered quite the thing. They said old man Bigloe had been a professor at the University of Virginia before they kicked him out for drunkenness. He always kept a bottle in the inside breast pocket of his frock coat, and he couldn't get through a spelling lesson without stepping back to Ma Simpson's kitchen three or four times to take a nip. Maybe he had had a good brain once, but it was fuzzy and booze-soaked by the time he opened the Bigloe Academy.

Anyway, he managed to get most of us through four steps of arithmetic and some spelling and history. The history and geography came together in the same class and it was the only class that old man Bigloe really liked. He would get to talking about Italy, and then Rome, and finally he'd get down to Caesar and he wouldn't give a damn if you threw spit balls or not. He was a thin man with a perpetual stoop to his shoulders, and sometimes he would go for two weeks without shaving. He always got a funny look in his eyes when he got to talking about Rome and those places, and it was generally agreed that he was crazy. During classes, Ma Simpson would always sit fat and watchful in one corner of the parlor, peeling potatoes, or paring apples. She always arranged to have a murderous-looking butcher knife in her hands, just in case old man Bigloe had a "spell" and tried to kill somebody. But he never did.

So that was Professor Bigloe's Academy. Professor Bigloe's Academy for Learning and Culture, if you want the whole name. We came there three times a week, Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, the boys riding in on horseback. There was a lot of hell raised, and a lot of fights; but now that I came to think of it, Ray Novak hadn't figured in any of them.

Maybe it was because of his size. He was a year or two older than most of us, and big for his age anyway, but then Criss Bagley had been bigger than any of us, and that hadn't kept him out of fights. I thought about that and finally had to admit that there was something about Ray Novak—but I didn't know what—that made you think twice before starting anything with him. He always had that quiet, sober look, even as a kid, and he didn't go in much for horseplay, as most of us did. He came to old man Bigloe's Academy for a curious reason, it seemed to the rest of us. To learn.

And, too, Ray's pa was the town marshal, and that made him something a little different. His pa had taught him everything there was to know about guns and shooting, and he was the only boy around John's City who could throw a tin can in the air and put two .44 bullets through it before it hit the ground. I only saw him do it once, but he did it so easy and perfectly that I knew it was no accident.

I don't think I ever liked Ray Novak much after that, although I had never thought about it until now. I remember practicing with Pa's old .44, the one I was wearing now, until my thumb was raw from pulling the hammer back, but one bullet in the can was the best I could do. I think that hit me harder than anything. I didn't mind it much when Ray would make one of his occasional rides over to the Bannerman ranch—trying to act as if he was just out looking for strays, and just happened to be on that part of the range. I knew that Laurin Bannerman was the real reason for his drifting off the home range. But I also knew that he was too bashful to do anything about it, except gawk. And, anyway, Laurin was mine.

Which was fine, but it didn't tell me the reason for that scared look on Ray Novak's face back there at the arroyo, while the cavalry was pounding by.

The sky in the east began to pale and we pulled our horses up to let them blow. Ray dropped down from his saddle and stretched, and I did the same. The morning was cool, and sharp with the early-spring smell of green things. I began to think of bacon, and coffee, and fresh-cooked cornbread.

"I figure we've got about another hour of riding time," Ray said. "We'll have to start looking for a place to bed down before long."

I said, "We'll ride until we find a place."

But Ray shook his head in that sober, solemn way of his. "I don't want to run into any more cavalry, or police. Not in the daylight. We're in enough trouble as it is."

I asked a question then, one I had been remembering about: "Are you afraid of trouble?"

He looked at me and answered in one word: "Yes."

Then, after thinking a moment, he went on, "I don't like this running. If we run into the state police and they recognize us there'll be a fight, and almost always when there's a fight, somebody doesn't walk away from it. That's the kind of trouble I'm afraid of. We're on the wrong side of the law."

"What law?" I said. "The Davis police? The Yankee soldiers, and the carpetbaggers, and scalawags, and bureau agents? If that's the law, I'm just as glad to be on the other side."

But he kept shaking his head. "There has to be law."

He was a nut on the subject. The law was all he knew, I guess. He had lived it, talked it, breathed it, ever since he was old enough to know what a sheriff's star was. And he couldn't remember the time when his Pa hadn't worn a star. Which was all right, as far as I was concerned—I'd never heard anything against Marshal Martin Novak. But all this talk of Reconstruction Law, as the turncoats called it, was beginning to disgust me.

I said, "Look, if you're so damned set on law and order, what are you running for? After you hit that cavalryman why didn't you go right on down to the jail and give yourself up? You seem to be forgetting one thing: right now I'd be back on the ranch in my own bed if it hadn't been for you. If you hadn't come running like a wall-eyed coot and got me mixed up in it. Why did you run in the first place, that's what I want to know, if you're so damned set on the law being enforced?"

The more I talked the madder I got, and I said things that I wouldn't have said if I hadn't been so hot. It was as much my fault as his, if I hadn't clubbed that carpetbagger the Yankees wouldn't have been so worked

up. Ray would have got off with a few days in jail and that would have been the end of it. But now it meant six months on the work gang, if they caught him. And me too. And I didn't intend to spend six months on the work gang, no matter whose fault it was.

For a long minute Ray Novak said nothing. In the first pale light of dawn, I could see his face getting hot and red, and I knew the smart thing to do would be to let him alone. But I was wound up and my mouth was running ahead of my thinking.

"Well," I said, "what are you going to do about it?"

He just stood there, getting hotter, and doing nothing. I guess Ray Novak wasn't used to being talked to like that. He was a lot like his Pa—the quiet, serious kind, commanding respect but not making a show of it. He didn't know what to do now, with an eighteen-year-old standing up and the same as calling him yellow. For a minute I thought he might go for his gun, and at that point I didn't care one way or another.

He took a deep breath and let it out slowly, and I could almost see him taking hold of himself. He said softly, "I guess we both need some sleep. We'd better be riding on."

"Just a minute," I said. "I want to know what you're going to do. You'd better know now that if we run into any law I'm not giving myself up for a spell on the work gang. If you don't feel the same way about it, we'd better split up here and now."

He gave it careful thought before answering. "Tall," he said finally, "I told you once I was sorry for dragging you into this. That's all I can do. If I had been smart, I would have given myself up in John's City. But I wasn't smart. Now it looks like we'll have to hide out for a little while. I'll hide out but I don't intend to fight the law, if it comes to that. If you don't want to ride with me, we'll split up, and no hard feelings."

He was a hard guy to hate for a long stretch of time. He was so dead serious about everything. "Oh, hell," I said. "Let's go."

So we rode on, neither of us saying anything. For a while I amused myself by thinking of the cavalry, and how foolish they must look pounding up and down the arroyo and wondering what had happened to us. I enjoyed that. It was the same as a military victory, for the war was not over in Texas. It would never be over as long as Sheridan sent men like Throckmorton and his bluebelly generals to rule Texas with soldiers. Or men like Pease, who threw out all the judges and sheriffs and mayors who might have been able to keep some semblance of law and order and put in his own scalawags who didn't give a damn for anything except to bleed the ranchers and farmers and cotton growers, and fatten their own bank accounts back in New York or Ohio or Pennsylvania or wherever they came from. And even worse, men like E. J. Davis.

E. J. Davis, the "reconstruction governor." Colonel Davis, Commanding Officer of the First Texas Cavalry, U. S. Volunteers. But I'd heard him called other things, standing under the wooden awning of Garner's Store, listening to old men talk. Old men with angry faces and outraged eyes, some of them with minie balls of the war still lodged in their lank, hungry bodies. "That bastard, Davis," was the way they usually put it. "Commanding Officer of the First Texas Traitors, Cowards, and Sonsofbitches." Around the time war broke out, Davis rounded up all the scum in Texas—or that's the way I always heard it, anyway—called them the First Texas Cavalry, and offered its services to the north. And, as reward for this thoughtfulness and foresight, Sheridan, in his fine office in New Orleans, from behind a blue cloud of fifty-cent-cigar smoke, had decided that E. J. Davis was just the man for the governor's office in Texas.

Oh, there was an election. General Philip Sheridan was a man to do things right. When the people of Texas began to get restless and complained that their livestock was all dying and the children weren't getting enough to eat because the Northern army was taking everything, the General began to give it some thought. By God, if the people of Texas didn't like the army, then he would give them a governor. There would be an election and they could choose anybody they wanted.

The only trouble was, if you wanted to vote, you had to take the "Ironclad Oath," and that weeded everybody out except the newly freed slaves, and some white trash, and maybe the veterans of the First Texas Cavalry, U. S. Volunteers. Davis won in a walk. "The people's choice!" the scalawag newspapers said.

While the war was going on, I wasn't old enough to understand everything about it. But I understood the bitterness as the ranchers' big herds dwindled down to a few mangy-looking old mossyhorns, and I remembered trying to eat meat without salt because ships couldn't get through the Northern blockade. And, somehow, I knew it was all the Yankees' fault.

Hating came as natural as breathing, in those days, in Texas. I remember overhearing a conversation in front of the hardware store in John's City, where some men were laughing over the old joke of, "You know what I just heard. A feller back there claims 'damn yankee' is two words instead of one?" I laughed, but it wasn't until a couple of years later that I found out what it was about. Even Professor Bigloe said "damnyankee" and I figured he ought to know.

That was Texas, after the war. Broke and hungry, and if it tried to lift itself to its knees it got a kick in the gut for its trouble. Pa got off easier than most ranchers, because he had been too old to go to war and was able to stay on the ranch and look after his herd. Most of the ranchers weren't so lucky. After they got back, they found that their cattle had scattered from hell to Georgia—what was left of them after the Union soldiers took what they wanted. And the Confederate soldiers too, for that matter. And the calves were unbranded and wild and belonged legally to anybody who could catch them and burn them with their own iron. Most of the cattlemen had to start all over again, and if they got their beef back it was usually with a gun. The best guarantee of ownership was a fast draw and a sure aim.

After Davis came the Davis police, or state police, and the governor was burned in effigy so often that the smell of smoke would automatically bring out a squad of soldiers with bayoneted rifles. The police were supposed to take the place of the soldiers who were being gradually drawn out of the South. But they weren't any better. They were worse, if anything, because they were made up of the freed blacks, and some turncoat whites.

Thinking of the Davis police brought me back to Ray Novak. Old Martin Novak was hit hardest of all by the police, because he had to sit back and watch white trash and hired gunmen take over his marshal's job and run it to suit themselves. There was no law in John's City, if you wanted to side in with the turncoats. And if you didn't, there was a law against everything. A rancher could be fined a hundred dollars for elbowing his way to a saloon bar, and, if he didn't have the money to pay, it would be taken out in beef cattle, with a dozen or so of the police going along to see that the collection was made. And all Martin Novak could do was watch. And wait. And hope that some day things would change and he could bring another kind of law back to John's City.

And Ray . . . Maybe that was what he was afraid of—of hurting his pa's chances of getting back into office. Maybe that was the reason he was so anxious to avoid any kind of brush with the law.

I was tired thinking about it. Maybe he was just plain yellow and had a streak up his back that you couldn't cover with both hands. I decided that when we started riding the next night Ray could go his way and I'd go mine. To hell with him.

It was just beginning to get light when we came to the creek, so we didn't have to argue about whether or not we were going to ride in the daylight. It was just a little stream, with the banks pretty well grown up in brush and salt cedars, and here and there a big green cottonwood. We rode along the bank for a while, looking for a place to stop. It looked like a good place for snakes, but not much of a spot for pitching camp. Finally we saw what we were looking for, a wide bend in the creek where the bank sloped down to the water, and the ground was brilliant green with new shoots of grass that was just beginning to come up. I didn't notice the horse until it was too late. It was a big black, with a white diamond in the middle of his forehead, grazing a big circle in the new green grass from the end of a picket rope. As we nosed around the bend, the horse was the first thing we saw. But it didn't hold our attention long. The next thing we saw was the black muzzle of a carbine.

I don't know how long I sat there looking at that gun before I realized that somebody had to be holding the thing. I don't suppose it was more than a small part of a second, but it seemed like a long time. By the time I was through looking at it, I knew everything about it.

It was a Ball magazine carbine, with the magazine under the barrel holding eight .50 caliber cartridges, loading from the rear. I had seen one or two of them before in cavalry officers' saddle boots. But guns like that didn't come easy, not even to cavalry officers. It was a beautiful piece of killing equipment. You could almost imagine that a man would be glad to get shot with a gun like that, if he cared anything for firearms. It had a tricky ramrod that pulled out the magazine spring to make loading fast and easy. Rim fire. It was a Yankee gun, but they hadn't brought it out in time to use it in the war, and I was glad of that. If they had, there would have been a lot more graves and a lot more boys sleeping under faded red flags with blue St. Andrew's crosses on them. I could almost tell, by looking at that carbine, what kind of man would be holding it.

The gun looked deadly, but quietly so. I figured the man would be the same. The gun didn't have an angry look or a belligerent look, but at the same time you knew it wouldn't stand for any foolishness. I wondered where the hell the owner had managed to get it, because I knew he wasn't a soldier, even before I looked at him.

And I was right. He was a long, hungry-looking man with faded gray eyes and a curious twist to his mouth that at first seemed like a smile, but after a second look you knew it wasn't. He had a face as long as a nightmare. His long, sharp nose drifted off to one side of his face, and there was a scar across the bridge, and a dent that you could lay the barrel of a .44 into. A week's growth of dirty gray beard didn't help his appearance any.

For clothes, he wore a hickory shirt with two buttons missing, a dirty bandana around his scrawny neck, and a pair of serge pants slick from saddle wear. His hat had been black once, a long time ago, but it wasn't much of any color now. His boots were about what you would expect.

I knew, before looking, that he would be wearing two side guns. I was right again. Two Colt's .44's, the regular "Army" percussion model, but they had been altered to use metallic cartridges and looked like different guns. The ramrods and lever were gone, and new blued ejectors were molded to the sides of the barrels, and the new cylinders had loading gates. They were clean and cold and deadly-looking, and the gunsmith who had done the altering had been a man who loved his work.

I saw all this while maybe a tick of a second went by, while Red was rearing up just a little because of the jerk I had given on the reins. And by the time Red's forefeet hit the ground again I had the feeling that the stranger and I were old friends—or rather, old acquaintances, because he didn't look like the kind of man who would have many friends. I didn't know what Ray Novak was thinking, but I noticed that he didn't do anything foolish, like going for his own .44 or trying to ride the man down. There was something about the stranger that told you instinctively that a trick like that would only get you a sudden burial.

It crossed my mind quickly that maybe the stranger was a bounty hunter. The Yankees had plenty of such men working for them, free-lance killers who hunted fugitives from carpetbag law at so much a head. But I discarded that thought before it had time to form. This man wasn't working for the carpetbag law, or any other kind of law, for that matter. I don't know how I was so sure of that. He just wasn't the type.

"Ain't it kind of early in the morning," the man said softly, "to be taking a ride?"

"Or late at night," I said.

The stranger's mouth twitched slightly in what was almost a nervous tic, and he made an almost silent grunting sound that came all the way up from his belly. It was like no sound I had ever heard before, but I was to find out later that it was laughter—or the closest thing to laughter that he ever came to. He hadn't asked us to raise our hands or drop our guns, so I figured that he didn't have anything against us in particular, except for the fact that we were strangers riding at an unusual hour.

I said, "We figured to make camp here on the bend, but I guess we can move on to another spot. . . ."

He made a negligent little motion with his shoulders. He had sized us up quickly as men not too friendly with the law. Why else would we be riding by night and sleeping by day? But he studied us for a while longer with that gray gaze of his. He regarded Red appreciatively, and the grub sack thoughtfully. I think it was the grub sack that made up his mind.

"I don't mind a bit of company . . . once in a while."

That, I knew was all the invitation we were going to get. He lowered his carbine, holding it in the crook of his arm, and I started to swing down from the saddle.

Then Ray Novak spoke for the first time. "We'll just move on," he said. "I reckon there are other places."

Ray hadn't taken to the stranger. Disapproval was stamped all over his face as he sat slouched in his saddle, his forehead screwed up in thought. Ray Novak had lived on law for so long that he recognized and hated outlaws instinctively. He was a special breed of man. Breeding, and blood lines, and training made his hackles rise at the sight of an outlaw, just as naturally as a long-eared Kentucky hound gets his back up at the sight of a badger. The fact that he was now an outlaw himself had nothing to do with it. He was still the son of Martin Novak.

I could see Ray thumbing back in his memory, going through all the dodgers on outlaws that had come through his pa's office, trying to place the stranger. He hadn't placed him yet. But sooner or later that plodding mind of his would come across the right dodger, and the right photograph or drawing, and the stranger would be pegged.

In the meantime, I didn't give a damn. I'd rather bed down with an outlaw than pull a stretch on the work gang. Anyway, I was tired of riding, and I was tired of Ray Novak. I dropped down from the saddle.

"If you want to ride on," I said, "you can ride. I'm stopping."

He didn't like that much. But he thought it over for a minute and didn't argue. Maybe he wanted to study the stranger some more. Or maybe he figured that all this was his fault in the first place and that made him bound to stay with me. I didn't know or care.

The stranger watched us carelessly as we unsaddled our horses and staked them around the bend near his big black. When we came back, he had a small fire going down near the water. He worked easily, almost lazily, selecting just the right kind of dry twigs. It was an expert fire, big enough to cook on but practically no smoke came from it. He looked up and smiled that half smile of his as I got the skillet out of the blanket roll and brought it and a bacon slab down to the fire. We were all friends, it seemed. But I noticed that he never let himself be maneuvered into a position that would show his back.

Before long, the sharp air of early morning was heavy with the rich smell of frying bacon. We propped the skillet over the fire on two rocks and once in a while I would turn the meaty slabs with a pocketknife. There is nothing like the smell of bacon in the early morning, but I was the only one that seemed to be interested. The stranger, I knew, was half starved, but he regarded the food only passively, hunkering down on his heels, with his back against the solid trunk of a cottonwood. Ray Novak hadn't said anything since we had unsaddled the horses, but I could see that he was still poking at the back of his mind, trying to get the man placed. I think the stranger saw it too. But he didn't seem to care.

We ate the bacon with Ma's cornbread, spearing the dripping slices with our pocketknives, chewing and swallowing without a word. The stranger helped himself only after Ray and I had what we wanted. After we had finished, I went down to the creek and rinsed the skillet and filled it with fresh water. When I got back, the two of them were still sitting there on the ground, without saying a thing, staring thoughtfully at each other.

We boiled coffee in the skillet and I found two tin cups that Ma had packed in the blanket roll. I poured for Ray and myself, and still not a sound from anybody. I began to wonder what Ray Novak would do after he finally dug the stranger out of his memory. The stranger must have been wondering the same thing. And I had a crazy kind of feeling that the stranger was feeling sorry for Ray.

The coffee was black and strong and coated with a thin film of bacon grease. Like the bacon, the stranger had his coffee after Ray and I had finished. The silence was beginning to work on me. It magnified far away sounds and brought my nerves out on top of my skin and rubbed them raw.

At last the stranger got slowly to his feet, "I'm much obliged for the grub," he said. "I guess I'll stretch out for a while. It's been a long night."

I said, "Sure." Ray Novak said nothing. The stranger walked up the slope a way, still not showing us his back, and stretched out under a rattling big cottonwood where his saddle was. He seemed to go to sleep, but there was no way of being sure about that. He pulled his hat partly over his face and lay down with his head on his saddle, but I had an uneasy feeling that he was just waiting.

I rinsed out the skillet and cups and put them back in the blanket roll. Ray had moved over to another cottonwood, still studying the stranger. Without looking at me, he said, "You'd better get some sleep, Tall."

"How about you?"

"I can stay awake for a while. I've got a feeling that one of us had better keep his eyes open."

The way he said it made me burn. It was in that offhand sort of way—the way you'd tell a kid to go on to bed, you had important things to do. Maybe he thought my eighteen years made me a kid. Maybe, I thought, Ray Novak could go to hell.

But I didn't try to make anything of it. Beginning tonight, I didn't intend to ride with him anymore. I spread my saddle blanket and sat leaning back against my saddle. I wasn't particularly sleepy, and, anyway, I wanted to see what Ray would do when he finally figured out who the stranger was.

Maybe fifteen minutes went by without either of us making a sound. Then, suddenly, Ray Novak made a little grunting noise and started to shove himself away from the cottonwood.

"All right," I said.

"All right what?"

"Who is our gun-loving friend? You've been working on it ever since he first stuck that carbine in our faces."

That took the wind out of him. "How did you know that?"

I shrugged. What difference did it make?

"Well, you were right," Ray said softly. "I should have figured it out a long time ago, but the beard and broken nose were things the government dodger on him didn't show. But I pegged him finally. He's Garret. Pappy Garret."

I didn't believe it at first. Pappy Garret was one of those men that you hear about all your life, but never see. The stories they told about him were almost as wild as the ones about Pecos Bill, or if you live in the north country, Paul Bunyan. He was wanted by both North and South during the war for leading plundering guerilla bands into the Kansas Free State. There wasn't a state in the Southwest that hadn't put a price on his head. Pappy Garret had the distinction of being probably the only thing in the world that the North and South saw alike on. They were out to get him.

Twenty notches was Pappy's record, as well as records of men like that could be kept. Some put the number of men who had gone down under Pappy's guns as high as thirty. But most claimed it was twenty, more or less, with some few claiming that he was overrated as a bad man and had never killed more than fifteen men in his life. No one, but Pappy Garret, would know for sure about that. And maybe Pappy didn't even know. The story was that he had a hideout up in the Indian Territory where he lived like a king by robbing the westbound wagon trains. Some people said that he lived with an Indian princess, the youngest daughter of the head chief of the Cheyennes. Others had it that he had been killed during the war fighting for the Confederacy—or the Union, depending on who was telling the story—and the real killer was Pappy Garret's son, a child of his by the Indian princess.

But most people didn't put much stock in that story. They figured that such a child couldn't be more than five or six years old, and a boy that age wasn't apt to be doing much killing. Not even a son of Pappy Garret's.

Still others had it that Pappy had gone to South America shortly after the war and was settled down there on a big plantation as respectable as you please, and all the killings that were laid to him were done by men who just happened to look a little like Pappy. Many such stories sprang up from time to time. Nobody really believed them, but it gave them something to talk about. The peace officers probably had the best idea of what Pappy was really like. He had killed two marshals on the Mexican border, and one up in the panhandle country not long before, when they tried to arrest him. They saw Pappy Garret as a killer, without any fancy trimmings.

It was hard to believe that the lank, hungry-looking man not twenty yards away could be Pappy Garret, but Ray Novak didn't make mistakes about things like that. I knew one thing, however: Pappy hadn't been living like a king up in the Indian Territory, nor anywhere else. He looked like he hadn't had a full belly since he was a child. Lying there with his eyes closed, with his head on the saddle, he looked more like a tired old man than a killer.

And maybe that was the reason I wasn't afraid of him. If I felt anything at all for Pappy Garret, it was sympathy. I'd had one night of running from the law, and that was plenty for me. I wondered how Pappy must feel after running for four or five years.

In the back of my mind, I realized that ten thousand dollars in bounty money was mine if I wanted it. All I had to do was draw my gun and empty it into Pappy Garret's skinny body and it was mine. There wouldn't even be any trouble when I rode back to John's City. The carpetbag law would be so glad to see Pappy's lifeless body dangling across that big black horse of his that they would forget the grudge they had against me. I'd be a hero, and a rich one at that. With ten thousand dollars, I could buy a piece of free range and have the beginnings of a ranch of my own. I could even marry Laurin Bannerman, which was what I wanted more than anything else.

But I didn't think I would be able to sleep at nights without seeing that ugly, tired face of Pappy's; so the thought of killing him never really got to be an idea.

Ray Novak had ideas of his own. He stood up quietly, his hand unconsciously going down to his hip and feeling of the butt of his gun. I said, "Just what do you aim to do?"

There had never been a doubt in Ray's mind about what to do, after he had figured out who Pappy was. I don't think it was the bounty that set his mind for him. He probably never even thought of that. He just had too much law in him to let a killer like Pappy Garret lie there and do nothing about it. He glanced at me briefly, without saying anything. I guess he figured that my question wasn't worth answering.

I said, "Let him alone. He hasn't done anything to us."

Ray had his gun out now. He glanced at me curiously, and there were two small clicks as he pulled the hammer back. "Are you crazy?"

"We can saddle up and go our own way," I said. "Let the law catch him if they want him. What has the law ever done for us?"

"You must be crazy," Ray Novak said softly, not bothering to keep the scorn out of his voice. "Didn't you hear me? That man's Pappy Garret. He's killed twenty men. He'll kill that many more if somebody doesn't stop him. Stopping a man like that isn't just a job for the law. It's a job for every man who wants to live in peace, for every man who wants to see law and order come back to Texas."

I don't think I would have done anything if he hadn't made that speech, but when he got to talking about the right of law, and the wrong of outlaws, he got a holier-than-thou glint in his eyes like a campmeeting preacher. Anyway, I was tired of Ray Novak. I was tired of his reverential respect for a tin sheriff's badge. I said, "Oh hell, stop being so damn self-righteous!"

He looked as if I had kicked him in the gut while he wasn't expecting it. Over beneath the cottonwood, Pappy Garret stirred uneasily, and it occurred to me to wonder why a man like that would go to sleep in the company of two strangers. Because he was asleep. There was no mistake about it now. Ray threw one quick angry glance in my direction—a glance that said that he was through with me, that from now on we could ride our separate ways.

"Very well, Tall," he said tightly. "I'll take care of it myself. You don't have anything to do with it."

"You're going to shoot him while he's asleep?"

"I'll take him any way I can. You don't give a mad dog a chance to protect itself, do you?"

All the talk had been in low whispers, but it was over now. Ray stepped out quietly, his gun at the ready. I could see what was going to happen. Ray would say something to wake Pappy—I knew he didn't have it in him to shoot a sleeping man. He would wake Pappy and Pappy would see how it was and try to get his guns. That would be the last move he would ever make. I had seen Ray handle guns and I knew Pappy Garret didn't have a chance.

I watched the sleeping gunman as those thoughts went through my mind. Pappy's face was relaxed now and I could see the deep lines of incredible weariness around his eyes and mouth. He looked as if he hadn't slept for days. I knew that he hadn't slept for years. Not real sleep. But now he lay like a log, numbed with weariness and comforted with hot food in his belly. He didn't look like a killer to me. He looked like an old man—very old and very tired—who couldn't hold his eyes open any longer.

Ray was coming up on Pappy's left, moving silently. In just a minute it would be over, if Pappy made a move for his guns. He would be able to sleep then—the long sleep that lasted forever.

The shout, when it came, startled me as much as anybody. It came high-pitched and loud and I hardly recognized it as my own.

"Pappy, look out!"

I lurched up to my feet. I don't know what I thought I was going to do then. It was too late to do anything but to stand there, half-crouched, and watch.

If I hadn't seen it I wouldn't have believed it. I never could entirely believe it when I watched Pappy handle guns. And you wouldn't believe that a man like Pappy could come awake as quick as he did, or that a man could move as fast. It all happened so fast that you couldn't be sure where the movement started and where it ended. He flipped over on his stomach and rolled on his right side, and his right hand started plunging down to his holster before my first word was out. Ray was almost on top of him. His .44 was already out and cocked, and Ray was the man who could put two holes in a tossed-up can before it hit the ground. But by the time he got his second shot off this time, it was too late.

Ray Novak's first bullet slammed into Pappy's saddle, where his head had been only an instant before. Before he could thumb the hammer and press the trigger again, Pappy's own deadly .44 had bellowed. Pappy lay on his side, firing across his body. He must have drawn the gun and cocked it while he was flopping over, but it looked as if it had been in his hand all the time. One bullet was all he used.

I still hadn't moved. I stood there in that frozen half-crouch waiting for Ray Novak to

"O. K. O. K.—I'll take care of it this weekend."

go down. When Pappy fired only once, I knew it was over. He got to his knees and slowly lifted himself to his feet, darting a glance in my direction.

He said mildly, "Just unbuckle your pistol, son, and kick it over here."

I slipped the buckle on my cartridge belt and dropped it. Then I kicked it toward Pappy. But the thing that held me fascinated was Ray Novak. He was still standing. He wasn't even swaying. Then I saw that his gun hand was empty and I began to understand what had happened.

It hadn't been anything as fancy as shooting a man's gun out of his hand. Not even Pappy Garret could have done that, shooting as fast as he had, from the position he had been in. He had shot to kill, but the bullet had nicked Ray's forearm, making him drop the gun.

I lost any suspicion I had about Ray Novak's guts. He had plenty. There was nothing he could do now but stand there and wait for Pappy to finish him off. But he didn't flinch, or beg, or anything else. He just stood there, staring into those pale gray eyes of Pappy Garret's, while bright red blood dripped from his fingers and splashed in a little pool at his feet.

"What are you waiting on, Garret?" he said. "Why don't you go ahead and finish it?"

Pappy smiled that tired, half-smile of his. He said softly, "I wouldn't waste another bullet on you. If I decide to kill you, I'll beat your brains out with a pistol butt. Now get the hell out of here before I do it."

Ray Novak's face burned a bright red. For a moment he didn't move. Then Pappy started toward him, slowly, holding his .44 like a club.

Ray said, "I'll get you Garret. There won't always be carpetbag law in this country. And then I'll get you, if it's the last thing I do."

Pappy kept coming, half smiling, with his pistol raised.

Ray turned then, and walked off, leaving a little trail of crimson in the tender green shoots of young grass. He didn't look at me. He walked on by. Around the bend he got his horse saddled, and pretty soon we heard him ride away.

I started to go myself. There was no explaining the reason I had yelled the way I had. Probably it had been because of a lot of things Ray Novak and his everlasting talk of law. Ray Novak being able to put two bullets in a tin can. Even those rides of his over to Laurin's might have had something to do with it. All that, and Pappy lying there under the cottonwood, looking like a tired, helpless old man.

Anyway, I had done it, Ray Novak and I were through for good now, but I didn't give a damn about that. I turned and started up toward the bend in the creek to get Red saddled up.

But Pappy said, "Just a minute, son. I'd like to talk to you."

CHAPTER THREE

I turned around. Pappy looked at me as he punched the empty cartridge out of his pistol and replaced it with a live round. After a moment he said:

"Thanks."

"Forget it. I wasn't trying to buy anything."

"You called me Pappy," he said. "How did you know who I was?"

"The other fellow figured it out. His old man used to be a town marshal and he saw your picture on one of the dodgers that came through the office."

Pappy shook his head, puzzled. "I know a man on the run when I see one. And he was on the run, the same as you. He didn't look like a marshal's son to me."

"His pa was marshal before the carpetbaggers took over."

Pappy began to understand. He rubbed a hand thoughtfully over his bushy chin. He moved back up the slope a few steps and sat down, leaning back with his elbows on his saddle. After a moment he untied the dirty bandana and mopped his face and the back of his neck.

There was something about him that fascinated me. Only a minute ago he had come within a hair's breadth of getting a bullet in his brain, and all the emotion he showed was to wipe his face with a dirty handkerchief.

"Well," he asked, "what are you staring at?"

"You," I said. "I was just wondering how you came to go to sleep at a time like that."

He thought about that for a moment, and at last he sighed. "I was tired," he said simply. "I haven't slept for more than two days."

I should have saddled Red right then and rode away from there. There was trouble in the air. You could feel it all around, and you got the idea that trouble flocked to Pappy like iron filings to a loadstone. But I didn't move.

I said, "Ray Novak will be on your trail again. Sooner or later he'll be riding behind a marshal's badge, and when that happens he'll hunt you down. You should have killed him while you had the chance."

I half expected Pappy to laugh. The idea of Pappy having anything to fear from a youngster like Ray Novak would have been funny to most people. But Pappy didn't laugh. He studied me carefully with those pale gray eyes.

"A man does his own killing, son, and that's enough," he said. "I reckon if you want this Novak fellow dead, you'll have to see to it yourself."

I flared up at that.

"I don't care if he's dead or alive. Ray Novak doesn't mean anything to me."

Something changed in Pappy's eyes. I had an idea that way down deep he was smiling, but it didn't show on that ugly face.

"Maybe I spoke out of turn," he said finally. "I guess you're right. I should have killed him . . . while I had the chance."

There didn't seem to be any more to say. I turned and headed around the bend to where Red was picketed, and Pappy didn't make any move to stop me. But I could almost feel those eyes on me as I threw the double-rigged saddle up on Red's broad neck and began to tighten the cinches. I got my blanket roll and tied it on behind and I was ready to go. I was ready to leave this creek and Pappy Garret behind. I had enough trouble as it was, and if I got caught, I didn't want it to be with a man like Pappy. I swung up to the saddle and pulled Red around to where the outlaw was still standing.

"I guess this is where I cut out," I said. "So long, Pappy."

"So long, son."

He looked a hundred years old right then. His heavy-lidded, red-rimmed eyes were watery with fatigue, and once in a while little nervous tics of sheer weariness would jerk at the corner of his mouth.

"Well," I said, "take care of yourself."

"The same to you, son," Pappy said. I started to pull Red around again and head downstream, when Pappy added, "Just a minute before you go."

He moved over a couple of steps to where his saddlebags were. He opened one of them and took out a pair of pistols, almost exactly like the ones he was wearing. Gleaming, deadly weapons, with rubbed walnut butts. He came over and handed them up to me.

"Bad pistols are like bad friends," he said. "They let you down when you need them most. You'd better take these."

I didn't know what to say. I looked at Pappy and then at the guns.

"Go on, take them," he said. "A fellow down on the border let me have them." And he smiled that sad, half smile of his. "He wasn't in any condition to object."

I took the guns dumbly, feeling their deadly weight as I balanced them in my hands. I had never held weapons like them before. They had almost perfect balance. I flipped them over with my fingers in the trigger guards, and the butts smacked solidly in my palms, as if they had been carved by an artist especially to fit my hands.

I took a deep breath and let it out slowly. "All right, Pappy," I said finally. "You win."

He looked surprised. "I win what?"

"I'll keep watch while you catch some sleep. That's what you wanted, wasn't it?"

Then I saw something that few people ever saw. Pappy Garret smiled. Not that sad, half smile of his, but a real honest-to-God, face-splitting smile that reached all the way to his gray eyes.

"I think we'll get along, son," he said.

So that's the way it was. I unsaddled Red again and staked him out, then I took my position up on the creek bank while Pappy stretched out again with his head on the saddle. He raised up once to look at me, still slightly amused.

"My hide is worth ten thousand dollars at the nearest marshal's office," he said. "How do I know you won't try to shoot me while I'm asleep?"

"If I'd wanted ten thousand dollars that bad," I said, "I'd have killed you the first time you went to sleep. And I wouldn't have been polite enough to wake you up first. I don't let my conscience bother me, the way Novak does."

Pappy's mouth twitched, and there was that almost silent grunting sound, and I knew that he was laughing. He was dead asleep before his head hit the saddle again.

I had time to do some thinking while Pappy slept. I decided that maybe it wouldn't be a bad idea, after all, to stick with Pappy until we reached the Brazos. If anybody would know all the out-trails to miss the cavalry and police, Pappy Garret was the man. And avoiding cavalry and police was about the most important thing I could think of right now.

I didn't think much about Ray Novak. We had never been anything in particular to each other, and now that we were separated for good, I was satisfied. I didn't give a damn where he went or what he did.

But I thought of Laurin Bannerman. Laurin, with eyes a little too large for her small face, and her small mouth that always looked slightly berry-stained, and her laugh that was as fresh as spring rain. I thought about her plenty now that I had time on my hands and there was nothing else to do. It was a funny thing, but I had never paid any attention to her until a couple of years ago. I guess that's the way boys are around that age. One minute girls mean nothing, and the next minute they're everything.

That was Laurin for me. Just about everything.

It was late in the afternoon when Pappy woke up. I was sitting under a cottonwood up on the creek bank, flipping my new pistols over and over to get the feel of them. Pappy sat up lazily, stretching, yawning, and scratching the mangy patches of beard on his face.

"That's better," he said. "Much better." He got up on his feet and hobbled around experimentally. "You handle those guns pretty good, son," he said. "Do you think you can shoot them as well?"

"Well enough, I guess."

Pappy shook his head soberly and beat

some of the dust from his battered hat. "That's one thing no man ever does—shoot well enough. Sooner or later, if you keep looking, you'll find some bird that can slap leather faster."

"How about you?" I asked.

Pappy grinned slightly. "Maybe I haven't looked long enough," he said. "But I don't expect to live forever."

He began getting his stuff together, a ragged gray blanket that still had C.S.A. stenciled on it in faded black letters, a change of clothing, and that was about all. He did have some tobacco, though. He took the sack out of his shirt pocket and poured some of the powdery stuff into a little square of corn shuck, Mexican style, and tossed the makings up to me.

"You figure to ride west tonight?" he asked casually.

"That's what I had in mind."

"Alone?"

He was holding a match up to his cigarette and I couldn't see his face. "I guess that's up to you," I said.

He got that surprised look again. "How do you mean, son."

He came up the slope and held a match while I got my cigarette to going "Isn't that what you had in mind all along?" I said. "You look like a man that's just about played out. I don't know what you're running from, or how long you've been at it, but I know a man can't stay on the alert twenty-four hours a day, the way you must have been doing. I'm on my way to the Brazos country. If you want to ride along and keep clear of the bluebellies, that's all right with me. We'll take turns sleeping and watching, and split up when we get to the river."

He tried to look all innocence, but he didn't have the face for it. "Do you think I'd let a mere boy tie up with a wanted man like me?"

"I think that's what you've been figuring on all along," I said.

I thought for a minute that he was going to break down and have a real laugh. But he didn't. He only said, "I guess we'd better get ready to ride. The sun will be down before long."

We made about twenty-five miles that night, and I knew before we had covered a hundred yards that I had picked the right man to get me through hostile country. Pappy knew every trick there was to learn about covering a trail. When a hard shale outcropping appeared, we followed it. When we crossed a stream we never came out near the place we went in. We even picked up the tracks of some wild cattle and followed them for two or three miles, mingling our own horses' hoofmarks with the dozens of others.

Pappy didn't ask me, but I told him about myself as we rode. I even told him about Laurin, and Ray Novak, and how we came to be on the run, but there was no way of knowing what he thought about it. He would grunt once in a while, and that was all.

The next day, when we started to ride again, Pappy found a holster for me in one of those saddle bags of his. "Some people will tell you that a good shot doesn't need but one gun," he said, "but that's a lot of foolishness. Two of anything is better than one."

I felt foolish at first. It seemed like a lot of hardware—a lot more than an ordinary man needed to pack. But, then, Pappy Garret wasn't an ordinary man, and when you were with Pappy you did as he did.

The day after that he said we didn't have to ride at night any more. He knew the country and there was nothing to worry about between us and the Brazos. Pappy, I gathered, was heading west to tie up with a trail herd and head for Kansas, but he never said so. He never said anything much after we got to riding, except for things like: "Loosen your cartridge belt, son. Let your pistols hang where your palms can brush the butts. Boothills are full of men that had to reach that extra inch to get their guns." Or, at the end of a day maybe, when we were sitting around doing nothing: "Clean your pistols, son. Guns are like women; if you don't treat them right, and they turn against you, you've got nobody to blame but yourself."

It was almost sundown of the fourth day when we raised the wooded high ground with a sagging little log shack partly dug into the side of a hill. A thin little whisper of smoke was curling up from a rock chimney.

"It looks like they're expecting us," Pappy said, squinting across the distance.

I looked at him, and he saw the question before I could ask it. "*They*," he said, "could be almost anybody. Anybody but the law, that is. The shack was built a long time ago by a sheep herder, but the cattlemen chased him out of Texas before he had time to get settled good. Some of the boys I know use it once in a while. I use it myself when I'm in this part of the country."

Well, I figured Pappy ought to know. We rode up toward the shack, and before long a man came out of it and stood there by the front door—the only door the cabin had—nursing what looked like a short-barreled buffalo gun. A Sharps maybe, about a .50 caliber, I guessed, when we got closer.

The man himself wasn't much to look at. About twenty-three or so, with a blunted, bulldog face, and long hair that hung down almost to his shoulders. His clothes were in about the same shape as Pappy's, and that wasn't saying much.

Pappy grunted as we pulled up near the crest of the hill. "It looks like one of the Creyton-boys," he said.

I had a closer look at the man. The Creyton boys had hard names in Texas. They were supposed to have been in on a bank robbery or two down on the border. There were three of them: Buck, and Ralph, and a younger one called Paul. I figured the one at the shack was Paul Creyton, because he looked too young to have done the things that Buck and Ralph had to their credit.

The man recognized Pappy as we drew up into the thicket that passed for a front yard. I saw there was a lean-to shed on the side of the shack—a place for keeping horses, I supposed—but there was no horse stable there. The man lowered his gun and came forward.

"Pappy Garret," he said flatly, "I had an idea you was up in Kansas."

Pappy grinned slightly and leaned across his big black's neck to shake hands. "A Texan likes to see the old home place once in a while. How are you, Paul?"

The man glanced sideways at me, and Pappy said quickly, "This is Tall Cameron, a friend of mine. He's riding as far as the Brazos with me."

We nodded at each other. Paul Creyton said, "You haven't seen Buck, have you?"

"Not for about two years," Pappy said.

"We split up down on the Black River," Creyton went on flatly, as if he had gone over the story a hundred times in his mind. "A Morgan County sheriff's posse jumped us just south of the river. Ralph's dead. A sonofabitch gave him a double load of buckshot. My horse played out about four miles off, down in the flats, and I had to leave him in a gully."

I watched Pappy stiffen, just a little, then relax. "That's too bad about Ralph," he said softly.

"A double load of buckshot the sonofabitch gave him," Paul Creyton said again. "Right in the face. I wouldn't of known him, my own brother, if I hadn't been standing right next to him and seen him get it." His little eyes were dark with anger, but I couldn't see any particular grief on his face. He jerked his head toward the shack. "It ain't much, Pappy, but you and your friend are welcome to stay with me. I was just going out to see if I couldn't shoot myself some grub."

Pappy looked at me. We had been riding a long way and our horses needed a rest, but he was leaving the decision up to me.

"I've got some side bacon and corn meal," I said. "I guess that will see us through supper."

We cooked the bacon at a small rock fireplace in one corner of the shack, then we fried some hoecake bread in the grease, and finally made some coffee. Pappy and Paul Creyton talked a little, but not much. Somehow I gathered that Pappy wasn't such a great friend of the Creytons as I had thought at first.

After supper, it was almost dark, and the only light in the shack came from the little jumping flames in the fireplace. Talk finally slacked off to nothing, and Paul Creyton sat staring into the fire, anger written into every line of his face. Whatever his plans were, he wasn't letting us in on them. Whatever was in his mind, he was keeping it to himself.

Pappy got up silently and went outside to look at his horse. I followed him.

"What do you think about that posse?" I said. "Do you think they'll follow Creyton up to this place?"

Pappy shook his head, lifting his horse's hoofs and inspecting them. "Not tonight. This place is hard to find if you don't know where to look, and Paul can cover a trail as well as the next one."

I rubbed Red down and gave him some water out of a rain barrel at the edge of the shack. His ribs were beginning to show through his glossy hide, and there were several briar scratches across his chest. But there wasn't anything wrong with him that a sack of oats or corn wouldn't fix.

I heard Pappy grunt, and I looked up. He had his horse's left forefoot between his knees, gouging around the shoe with a pocketknife.

"A stone bruise," he said. "He's been walking off center since noon, but I figured it was because he was tired." He got the rock that was caught under the rim of the shoe and flipped it out. "Well, there won't be any riding for a day or so, until that hoof is sound again."

"That means staying here tomorrow?"

"It means *me* staying here. You don't have to. Another day's ride will put you on the Brazos."

For a minute I didn't say anything. I hadn't figured that it would be any problem to pack up and leave Pappy any time I felt like it. But there was something about that ugly face that a man could get to like. He didn't have many friends. Maybe I was the closest thing to a friend that he had ever had. I made up my mind.

"I'll wait," I said. "We'll ride in together."

I imagined that I saw Pappy smile, but it was too dark now really to see his face. Then, without looking up, he said, "In that case, you'd better keep an eye on that red horse of yours."

"What is that supposed to mean?"

"If you were on foot," Pappy said, "and in no position to get yourself a horse, what would you do?"

"Like Paul Creyton."

"We'll say like Paul Creyton."

I began to get mad just thinking about it. "If he lays a hand on Red," I said, "I'll kill him."

Pappy turned, and stretched, and yawned, as if it were no concern of his. "Maybe I'm wrong," he said, "but I doubt it. He's got to have a horse, and that animal of yours is the closest one around."

He started back toward the shack, toward

the doorway faintly jumping in orange firelight. "Just a minute," I said. "How are you so sure that he won't try to steal that black of yours?"

Pappy smiled. He was in the dark, but I knew he was smiling.

"Paul Creyton knows better than to steal an animal of mine," he said.

When I got back to the shack I decided that Pappy had the whole thing figured wrong. Creyton had his blanket roll undone and was stretched out in front of the fireplace when I came in. He didn't look like a man ready to make a quick getaway on a stolen horse. Pappy was sitting on the other side of the room with his back to the wall, smoking one of his corn shuck cigarettes.

"It seems like Paul just came from your part of the country," he said.

"John's City?"

Creyton sat up and worked with the makings of a cigarette. "That's the place," he said. "Me and Ralph and Buck came through there a few days back. About the day after you pulled out, according to what Pappy tells me."

I looked at Pappy, but his face told me nothing.

"Well, what about it?"

"Nothing about it," Creyton said bluntly. "We just came through it, that's all. The carpetbag law was raisin' hell. Stoppin' all travelers, police makin' raids on the local ranchers. All because some white punk took a swing at a cavalryman, they said."

I hadn't been ready for that. I had figured, like Ray Novak, that if the two of us got out of the country for a while it would all blow over. But here the police were raiding the ranches, because of us. Our own place, maybe. Or the Bannerman place, where Laurin was.

If one of the pigs so much as laid a hand on Laurin . . .

The thought of it made me weak and a little sick. I wheeled and started for the door.

"Where do you think you're going?" Pappy said.

"Back to John's City."

"Do you plan to go on foot? I don't care what you do with yourself, but I hate to see you kill a good horse out of damn foolishness. Wait till tomorrow. You'll make better time in the long run by giving your horse a rest."

Pappy was right. I knew that, but it wasn't easy staying here and wondering what might be happening to Laurin, or Ma and Pa, and doing nothing about it. Creyton got slowly to his feet, standing there in front of the fireplace, looking at me.

"You'd better listen to Pappy, kid," he said. "When you need a horse you need him bad. I ought to know."

I didn't want Creyton's advice. For all I knew, he just wanted me to stick around a while longer to give him a better chance to steal my horse. But I knew they were both right. Red had been pushed hard for the past few days, and if I tried to push him again tonight he might break down for good.

So I stayed. When the fire burned out, we made blanket pallets on the dirt floor, and before long Pappy's heavy breathing told me that he was asleep. He didn't snore. From time to time the rhythm of his breathing would break, he would rouse himself, look around, and then go back to sleep again. That was the way Pappy was. He never slept sound enough to snore. You had a feeling that he never let his mind be completely blanked out, that he always kept some little corner of it open. Being on the run had done that. He was afraid to allow himself the luxury of real sleep. A man like Pappy never knew when he would have to be wide awake and ready to shoot.

I lay awake for a long while, listening to a night wind moan and fling gravel and dust against the shack. Creyton seemed to be asleep. His breathing was regular, and once in a while he would snort a little and roll over on the hard ground. I lay there, with my eyes wide open, not taking any chances.

The night crawled by slowly. How many hours, I don't know. My eyes burned from keeping them open, and every so often I'd feel myself dropping off and I'd have to start thinking about something. I wanted a cigarette, but I didn't dare light one. I was asleep, as far as Paul Creyton was concerned, and I wanted to keep it that way in case he had ideas about that red horse of mine. I started thinking about Laurin.

"You're getting plenty of power—but we'll have to work more on your timing."

I was dreaming of Laurin when something woke me. I didn't remember going to sleep, but I had. I sat up immediately, looking around the room, but it was too dark to see anything. I could hear Pappy's breathing. But not Paul Creyton's.

Sickness hit in my stomach, and then anger. Then, outside the shack, I heard Red whinny, and I knew that was the thing that had wakened me.

I went to the door, and in the pale moonlight I could see Paul Creyton throwing a saddle up on Red's back. So Pappy had been right all along. I found my cartridge belt on the floor, swung it around my middle and buckled it. Pappy didn't move. Didn't make a sound.

I didn't feel angry now, or in any particular hurry. I knew Creyton wasn't going to get away with stealing my horse, the same as that time, years ago, when I had known that Criss Bagley wouldn't hit me with that club. I didn't know just how I would stop him; but I would stop him, and that was the important thing.

The night was quiet, and the sudden little scamper of Red's hoofs was the only thing to disturb it as I stepped out of the shack. Creyton had the horse all saddled and ready to ride by the time I got out to the shed. He was standing in the shadows, on the other side of Red, and I couldn't see him very well. But he could see me.

I never heard of a man talking his way out of horse stealing, and I guess Creyton never had either. Anyway, he didn't try it this time. He moved fast, jerking Red in front of him. Everything was so cut and dried that there wasn't any use thinking about it, even if there had been time. I dropped to my knees, with one of my new .44's in my hand. For just a moment I wondered how I was going to get Creyton without hitting Red. Then I made out the figure of Creyton kneeling under the horse's belly, and his gun blazed.

It all happened before Red could jump. I felt the .44 kick twice in my hand, the shots crowding right on top of Creyton's, and something told me there was no use wasting any more bullets. Red reared suddenly and, as he came crashing down with those ironshod hoofs, there was a soft, mushy sound, like dumping a big rock into a mud hole.

I thought for a minute that I was going to be sick. But that passed. I ran forward and caught hold of the reins and stroked the big horse's neck until he began to quiet down.

Paul Creyton was dead. I dragged him out into the moonlight and had a look at him. His face was a mess of meat and gristle and bone where Red's hoof had caught him, but that wasn't the thing that had done it. He had a bullet hole in the hollow of his throat, just below his adam's apple, and another one about six inches up from his belt buckle.

It had all happened too fast to make much of an impression on me at first. But now I was beginning to get it. I backed up and swallowed to keep my stomach out of my throat. I hadn't known that a man could die like that. Just a flick of the finger, enough to pull a trigger, and he's dead. As easy as that. The night was cool, almost cold, but I felt sweat on my face, and on the back of my neck. Sweat plastered my shirt to my back. I headed back toward the shack.

It occurred to me to wonder what had happened to Pappy. He must have heard the shooting. The way he slept.

As I stepped through the doorway, a match flared and Pappy's face jumped out at me as he lit a cigarette. He put the match out and I couldn't see his face any more, just the glowing end of that corn shuck tube, with little sparks falling every once in a while and dying before they hit the floor.

He said at last, "Creyton?"

"He's dead."

I could see the fire race almost halfway down the cigarette as he dragged deeply. I was still too numb to put things together. I only knew that Pappy had been awake at the time of the shooting and he had made no move to help me.

"Well," he said, "it's just as well. Maybe I could have stopped it, but I doubt it. Sometimes it's best to let things run until they come out the way they're bound to in the end, anyway."

"Were you awake," I asked, "while he was trying to steal my horse?"

"I was awake."

"A hell of a friend you are! What was the

idea of laying there and not even bothering to wake me up?"

"You woke up," Pappy said mildly. "Anyway, it wasn't any of my business. I did my part when I warned you about Paul Creyton. What if I had walked into the quarrel and shot Paul for you? What difference would it have made? He's dead anyway."

"But what if he had shot me?"

I could almost see Pappy shrug. "That's the way it goes sometimes. By the way, you handle guns pretty well, at that. Paul Creyton wasn't the worst gunman in Texas, not by a long sight."

It took me a while to get it. But I had a good hold now. All the time I had been thinking that Pappy was my friend. He didn't even know what the word meant. Bite-dog-bite-bear, every man for himself, that was the way men like Pappy Garret lived. Unless, of course, some dumb kid came along who might be of some use to him for a few days. I'd played the fool all right, thinking that you could ever be friends with a man like that.

"Buck Creyton," I said. "You were afraid to take a hand with his kid brother because you'd have Buck Creyton on your tail."

"I'll admit I gave Buck some thought in the matter," Pappy said.

I found that I still had the pistol in my hand. I flipped it over and shoved it in my holster. It's surprising how fast the shock of killing a man wears off. I wasn't thinking of Paul Creyton now. I was just thinking of how big a fool I had been, and getting madder all the time.

"This finishes us, Pappy. From now on you take your trail and I'll take mine. This is as far as we go together."

"Of course, son," he said easily. "Isn't that the way you wanted it all along?"

I left Pappy in the shack. I'd had enough of him. I went outside and gentled Red some more and wondered vaguely what to do with Paul Creyton. I didn't have any feeling for him one way or the other, but it didn't seem right just to leave him there.

What I finally did was to drag him down to the bottom of the slope and roll up boulders to build a tomb around him. That was the best I could do since I didn't have anything to dig a grave with. It was hard work and took a long time, but I stuck with it and did a good job. Anyway, it had a permanent look, and it would keep away the coyotes and buzzards.

When I finished, the sky in the east was beginning to pale, and it was about time to start riding back toward John's City. I stood there for a while, beside the tomb, half wishing I could work up some feeling for the dead man. A feeling of regret, or remorse, or something. But I didn't feel anything at all. I looked at the pile of rocks that I had rolled up, and it was hard to believe that a man was under them. A man I had killed.

When I started up toward the shack again, I saw that Pappy had come outside and had been watching the whole thing. There was a curious twist to his mouth, and a strange, faraway look in his eyes, as I walked past him. But he didn't speak, and neither did I.

I got Red saddled again, and, as I finished tying on the blanket roll, Pappy came over.

"You probably don't want any advice," he said, "but I'm going to give you some anyway. Go on down to your uncle's place on the Brazos, like your old man wanted. You'll just get into trouble if you go back home and try bucking the police."

I swung up to the saddle without saying anything.

Pappy sighed. "Well . . . so long, son."

I had forgotten that I was still wearing the guns that he had given me, or I would have given them back to him. As it was, I just pulled Red around and rode west.

CHAPTER FOUR

Around the second day, on the trail back to John's City, I began to think straight again. I began to wonder if maybe Pappy hadn't been right again and I was acting like the damn fool by going back and asking for more trouble from the police. Maybe—but I had a feeling that wouldn't be wiped away by straight thinking. It was a feeling of something stretching and snapping my nerves like too-tight banjo strings. I couldn't place it then, but I found out later what the feeling was. It was fear.

Up until now it was just a word that people talked about sometimes. I always thought it was something a man felt when a gun was pointed at him and the hammer was falling forward, or when a condemned man stood on the gallows scaffold waiting for the trap to spring. But then I remembered that I hadn't felt it when Paul Creyton had taken a shot at me a few nights back. This was something new. And I couldn't explain it. When I felt it, I just pushed Red a little harder in the direction of John's City.

We made the return trip in three days, because I wasn't as careful as Pappy had been about covering my trail. We came onto the John's City range from the north, and I made for the Bannerman ranch first because it was closer than our own place, or the Novak ranch down by the arroyo. I remember riding across the flat in the brilliant afternoon, wondering what I would do if the cavalry or police happened to be waiting for me there at the Bannerman's. I had been around Ray Novak and his pa enough to be familiar with the law man's saying: "If you want to catch a fugitive, watch his woman."

But I didn't see anything. I raised the chimney of the Bannerman ranch house first, sticking clear-cut against the ice-blue sky. And pretty soon I could make out the whole house and the corrals and outbuildings, and before my eyes noticed it, that feeling in my stomach came back again and told me that something was wrong.

It was too quiet, for one thing. There are sounds peculiar to cattle outfits—the sound of blacksmith hammers, the rattle of wagons, or clop of horses—sounds you don't notice particularly until they are missing. There were none of those sounds as I rode into the ranch yard.

And there were other things. There were no horses in the holding corrals, and the barn doors flapped forlornly in the prairie wind, and the bunkhouse, where the ranch hands were supposed to be, was empty. The well-tended outfit I had seen a few days before looked like a ghost ranch now. And, somehow, I knew it all tied up with that feeling I had been carrying.

I rode Red right up to the back door and yelled in.

"Laurin! Joe! Is anybody home?"

It was like shouting into a well just to hear your voice go round and round the naked walls, knowing that nobody was going to answer.

"Laurin, are you in there?"

Joe, the old man, the ranch hands, they didn't mean a damn to me. But Laurin . . .

I didn't dare think any further than that. She was all right. She had gone away somewhere, visiting maybe. She *had* to be all right.

I dropped down from the saddle, took the steps in one jump, and rattled the back door.

"Laurin!"

I hadn't expected anything to happen. It was just that I didn't know what else to do. I was about to turn away and ride as fast as I could to some place where somebody would tell me what was going on here. Something was crazy. Something was all wrong, I could sense it the way a horse senses that he's about to step on a snake, and I wanted to shy away, just the way a horse would do. I took the first step back from the door, when I heard something inside the house.

It moved slowly, whatever it was. Not with stealth, not as if it was trying to creep up on something. More as if it was being dragged, or as if it was dragging itself. Whatever it was, it was coming into the kitchen, toward the back door where I still stood. Then I saw what it was.

"Joe," I heard myself saying, "my God, what happened to you?"

He was hardly recognizable as a man. His face had been beaten in, his eyes were purplish blue and swollen almost shut. His mouth was split open and dried blood clung to his chin. Blood was caked on his face and in his hair and smeared all over the front of his shirt.

"What are you doing here?" he asked dully. I noticed then that his front teeth were missing. But I only noted it in passing. In the back of my mind. I could think of only one thing then—Laurin.

I jerked the screen door open and went inside. "Joe, where's Laurin? Is she all right?"

He looked at me stupidly and I grabbed the front of his shirt and shook him.

"Answer me, damn you! Where's Laurin?"

He shook his head dumbly and began to sag. I held him up and pulled a kitchen chair over with my foot and let him sit down.

"So help me God," I said, "if you don't tell me what happened to Laurin I'll finish what somebody else started."

He worked his mouth. I couldn't tell if he understood me or not. It took him a long time to get a sound out. He worked his mouth, rubbed his bloody face, licked his split lips.

Then, "Laurin . . ." he said finally. "She's . . . all right."

I realized that I had been holding my breath all the time it had taken him to get those words out. Now I let it out. It whistled between my teeth, and my heart began to beat and blood began to flow. Relief washed over me like cool water on a hot day.

"Where is she, Joe? Tell me that."

He started to get up, then sat down again. He made meaningless motions with his hands. Whoever had worked on him had done a hell of a good job. I wondered if maybe there wasn't a hole in the back of his head where all his brains had leaked out.

"Answer me, Joe! Where is she? Where is Laurin?"

"Your place," he managed at last. "Your place . . . with your ma."

I didn't stop to wonder what Laurin would be doing at our ranch. I was too relieved to wonder about anything then. Joe started to stand up again and I pushed him down.

"Stay where you are," I said. "I'll get you some water."

I found a bucket of water and a dipper and a crock bowl on the kitchen wash stand. Then I got some dish towels out of the cupboard and brought the whole business over and put it on the kitchen table. I wet the towel and wiped some of the blood off his face. I squeezed some water over his head and cleaned a deep scalp wound behind his ear. That was about all I could do for him. He didn't look much better after I had finished, but he seemed to feel better.

I gave him a drink out of the dipper and said, "Can you talk now?"

He touched his mouth gently, then his eyes, and nose. "Yes," he said. "I guess I can."

"What happened to you?" I asked. "What happened out there?" I motioned toward the empty corrals and barns and bunkhouse out in the ranch yard.

"The police," he said. "The damned state

police. They came here yesterday morning wanting to know where you were. When we didn't tell them, they ran off all the livestock —that's where the hands are, looking for the cattle. They threatened to burn the place if we didn't tell them. They're mad. Crazy mad. That bluebelly that Ray gave the beating to was the governor's nephew, or cousin, or something, and all hell's broke loose in John's City. They're out to get every man that ever said a word against the carpetbag rule. They want you especially bad, I guess."

"Why do they want me so bad? Hell, I wasn't the one that hit the governor's kin folks."

Because you're the only one that got away from them." Joe Bannerman said. "Ray Novak came back and gave himself up. But they're not satisfied. They got to thinking about that fight you had a while back. They won't be satisfied until they've got you on the work gang, right alongside of Ray."

So Ray Novak had come back. Gave himself up to Carpetbag law. It didn't surprise me the way it should have. Maybe I knew all along that sooner or later all of that law-and-order his old man had pounded into him would come to the top. Well, that was all right with me. He could put in his time on the work gang if he wanted to, but not me. Not while I had two guns to fight with.

Joe Bannerman was studying me quietly, through those purple slits of eyes. Something was going on in that mind of his, but I couldn't make it out at first. There was something about it that made me uneasy.

"The police," I said, "they came back today to have another go at finding out where I'd gone. Is that how you got that face?"

He nodded and looked away. It hit me then, and I knew what it was about his eyes that worried me. For some crazy reason, Joe Bannerman was feeling sorry for me. That wasn't like him. Refusing to give information to the bluebellies was different—any honest rancher would have done the same thing—but that look of sympathy—I hadn't been ready for that. Not from Joe.

He said, "Tall, have you been home yet?"

"Not yet," I said. "I wanted to make sure that Laurin was all right."

"I thought maybe you knew," he said. "I figured maybe that was the reason you came back."

I looked at him. "You thought I knew what?"

"About your pa."

"Damnit, Joe, can't you come out and tell something straight, without breaking it into a hundred pieces? What about Pa?"

Then he lifted his head and he must have looked at me for a full minute before he finally answered.

"Tall, your pa's dead."

I don't know how long I stood there staring at him, wanting to curse him for a lousy liar, and all the time knowing that he was telling the truth. That was the answer to the feeling I'd had. It all made sense now. Pa, a part of me, had died.

Somehow I got out of the house. I remember Joe Bannerman saying, "Tall, be careful. There's cavalry and police everywhere."

I punished Red unmercifully going across the open range to the east toward our place. I rode like a crazy man. The sensible part of my brain told me that there was no use taking it out on Red. It wasn't his fault. If it was anybody's fault, it was my own, but the burning part of my brain wanted to hit back and hurt something, as Pa had been hurt, and Red was the only thing close at hand.

But all the wildness went away the minute our ranch house came into sight, and there was nothing left but emptiness and ache. There were several buggies and hacks of one kind or another sitting in front of the house, and solemn, silent men stood around in little clusters near the front porch. I swung Red around to come in the back way, and the men didn't see me.

I didn't see any police. All the men were ranchers, friends of Pa's. The womenfolk, I knew, would be inside with ma. As I pulled Red into the ranch yard, Bucky Stow, one of our hands, came out of the bunkhouse. When he saw who it was, he hurried toward me in that rolling, awkward gait that horsemen always have when they're on the ground.

"Tall, damn it," he said, "you oughtn't to come here. The damn bluebellies are riled up enough as it is."

I dropped heavily from the saddle and put the reins in his hands. I noticed then that I had brought blood along Red's glossy ribs where I had raked him hard with my spur rowels, and for some crazy reason that made me almost as sick as finding out about Pa. Pa had loved that horse.

But I slapped him gently on the rump and he seemed to understand. I said, "Give him some grain, Bucky. All he wants."

"Tall, you're not going to stay here, are you?"

I left him standing there and headed toward the house. I went into the kitchen where two ranch wives were rattling pots and pans on the kitchen stove. They looked up startled, as I came in. I didn't notice who they were. I went straight on through the room and into the parlor.

The minute I stepped into the room everything got dead quiet. Ma was sitting dry-eyed in a rocker, staring at nothing in particular. Laurin was standing beside her with a coffee pot in one hand, holding it out from her as if she was about to pour, but there was no cup. She stared at me for a moment. Then, without a word, she began getting the other women out of the room.

In a minute the room was empty, except for just me and Ma. I don't think that it was until then that she realized that I was there. I walked over to her, not knowing what to do or say. When at last she looked up and saw me, I dropped down and put my head in her lap the way I used to do when I was a small boy. And I think I cried.

One of us must have said something after that, but I don't remember. After a while one of the ranch wives, well meaning, came in from the kitchen and said timidly:

"Tall, hadn't you better eat something?"

It was so typical of ranch wives. If there's nothing that can possibly be done, they want to feed you. Ma would have done the same thing if she had been in the woman's place.

I got to my feet and said, "Later, not now, thank you." The words sounded ridiculous, like somebody turning down a second piece of cake at a tea party. And out there somewhere Pa was dead.

The woman disappeared again, and I touched Ma's head, her thin, gray hair. "Ma . . ." But I didn't know how to go on. I wasn't any good at comforting people. And besides she was still too numb with shock to understand anything I could say to her.

As I stood there looking at her, the ache and emptiness in my belly began to turn to quiet anger. Slowly, I began to put things together that I had been too numb to think about before. Instinctively, I knew that Pa hadn't died in any of the thousand and one ways a man could die around a ranch. He had been killed. I didn't know by whom, but I would find out. And when I did . . .

Ma must have sensed what I was thinking. She looked up at me with those wide, dry eyes of hers. She noticed the two .44's that I had buckled on, and I saw a sudden stark fear looking out at me.

"Tall . . . no! There's nothing you can do now. There's nothing you can do to bring him back."

But that anger that had started so quietly was now a hot, blazing thing. I heard myself saying:

"He won't get away with it, Ma. Whoever it was, I'll find him. Texas isn't big enough for him to hide where I can't find him. And when I do find him . . ."

That helplessness and terror in her eyes stopped me. She looked at me, and kept looking at me, as if she had never seen me before. I should have kept my thoughts to myself, but it was too late to change that now.

"Ma," I said, "don't worry about me."

But she didn't say anything.

I went back to the kitchen and motioned to one of the ranch wives. "Would you mind looking after Ma for a while?" I asked. "I want to go outside where the men are."

"Of course, Tall." She was a tremendous, big-bosomed woman, holding a steaming coffee pot in her hand. She had that same look of sympathy in her eyes that I had noticed with Joe Bannerman, and I hated it.

I went out the back way instead of the front, where I would have to pass through the parlor again and face that look of Ma's. Jed Horner was the first man I saw, a small rancher to the south, down below the arroyo. He and Cy Clanton were talking quietly near the end of the front porch. Neither of them seemed especially surprised to see me. They came forward solemnly to shake hands, something they never would have bothered about if Pa had been alive.

"We guessed that you'd be comin' back, Tall," Jed Horner said soberly, "as soon as you got the word."

"I guess you know all about it, don't you?" Cy Clanton asked.

"I don't know anything," I said, the words coming out tight. "But I'd like to know."

The two men nodded together, both of them glancing curiously at my two pistols. Then I noticed something strange for a gathering like this. All the men were armed, not only with the usual side guns, but some of them with shotguns and rifles.

"It was the police," Horner said. "Some damned white trash from down below Hooker's Bend somewhere. It seems like all the Davis police in Texas have congregated here at John's City. They claim they're goin' to teach us ranchers to be Christians if they have to kill half of us doin' it." Then he patted the old long-barreled Sharps that he held in the crook of his arm. "But we've got some idea about that ourselves."

"About Pa," I said. "I want to know how it happened."

"The police, like I said," Horner shrugged. "There must have been about a dozen of them, according to your ma. They started pushin' your pa around, tryin' to make him tell where you'd gone, and one of them hit him with the barrel of his pistol. That, I guess, was the way it happened."

"The funeral was yesterday," Cy Clanton said. "We buried him in the family plot in the churchyard at John's City. There wasn't a better man than your pa, Tall. If the police want a war, that's what they're goin' to get."

The anger was like a knife in my chest. The other men drifted over one and two at a time until I was completely surrounded now. Their eyes regarded me soberly.

I said, "Does anybody know the one that did it? The one that swung the pistol?"

Pat Roark, a thin, sharp-eyed man about my own age, said, "I heard it was the captain of the Hooker outfit. It seemed like he was a friend of that carpetbagger you gun whipped a while back. Name of Thornton, I think."

I knew what to do then. I turned to Bucky Stow who had sidled in with the group of men. "Bucky, cut out a fresh horse for me,

will you? I guess I'll be riding into John's City."

There was a murmur among the men. A sound of uneasiness. "Don't get us wrong, Tall." Jed Horner said. "We're behind you in whatever you decide to do about this. Like I said, there wasn't a better man than your pa. But I think you ought to know it would be taking an awful chance riding right into town that way. Police are thick as lice on a dog's back."

I turned on him. "You don't have to go with me. It's my job and I can take care of it myself."

Tall, you know we don't mean it that way. If that's what you want, why I guess you can count on us to be with you."

The other men made sounds of agreement, but a bit reluctantly. Then a man I hadn't noticed before pushed his way to the front. He was a small man with a ridiculously large mustache, and dark, intelligent little eyes peering out from under bushy gray eyebrows. He was Martin Novak, Ray Novak's father.

"Don't you think you ought to think this over, Tall?" he asked quietly. "Is it going to settle anything if you and the other ranchers go riding into town, looking for a war?"

"I'm not asking anybody to go with me," I said.

He regarded my two pistols, and I wondered if Ray had told him about Pappy Garret. But those eyes of his didn't tell me a thing. Then he seemed to forget me and turned slowly in a small circle, looking at the other men.

"Why don't you break it up?" he asked quietly. "Go on home and give things a chance to straighten out by themselves. It'll just make things worse—somebody else will get killed—if you all go into town looking for trouble." Then he turned back to me. "Tall, you're wanted in these parts by the law. These other men will be breaking the law, too, if they tie up with you in this thing. Sooner or later there'll be real law in Texas. When that happens, this man Thornton will get what's coming to him. I'll give you my word on that."

He actually meant every word of what he was saying. He had lived law for so long that anything that walked behind a tin badge got to be a god to him.

"Do you expect me to do like your son?" I asked tightly. "Would you want me to give myself up to the bluebellies, after what they have just done here?"

He started to say something, and then changed his mind. He looked at me for a long moment, then, "I guess it wouldn't do any good to tell you what I think, Tall. You'd go on and do things your own way."

He turned and walked through the circle of ranchers. I heard Pat Roark saying, "Well, I'll be damned. I never figured the marshal would back down on his own people when it came to a fight with the bluebellies."

We rode away from the ranch house with me in the van, and Pat Roark riding beside me. There was about a dozen of us, and we rode silently, nobody saying a word. I concentrated on the thud of the bay's hoofs, and the little squirts of powdery red dust that rose up, and a lazily circling chicken hawk up above, cutting clean wide swaths against a glass sky. I didn't dare to think of Pa. There would be time enough for that.

We traveled south on the wagon road that we always used going to Garner's Store, across the arroyo and onto the flats. We reached Garner's Store, a squat boxlike affair made of cottonwood logs and 'dobe bricks, about an hour after leaving the ranch house. It set in the V of the road, where the wagon tracks leading from the Bannerman and the Novak ranches came together. As we sighted the store, we saw two Negro police leave in a cloud of dust, heading south.

There was no use going after them. A dozen armed men couldn't very well ride into town and expect to surprise anybody. We pulled our horses up at the store and let them drink at the watering trough. After a while old man Garner came out looking vaguely worried.

I said, "Those were Davis police, weren't they, the ones that fogged out of your place a few minutes back?"

The old man nodded. "I guess they was kind of expectin' something out of your pa's friends, Tall. Anyway, they stayed here until they saw you comin', and then they lit out for town."

Pat Roark said, "Did they mention what outfit they was out of?"

The old man thought. "They mentioned Hooker's Bend. I reckon they come from around there."

Pat looked at me. "You ready to ride, Tall?"

"I'm ready."

CHAPTER FIVE

As we rode, Pat Roark seemed to be the only man in the whole group who was completely at ease. He rode slouched over to one side of his saddle, grinning slightly, as if he was looking forward to the excitement. He's just a kid, I thought. Nothing but a damned green kid who doesn't know what he's getting into. But then I realized that he was as old as I was. Maybe a few months older. I'd never thought of him before as being a kid.

"Cavalry," Pat Roark said, as if he had been giving it considerable thought. "They're the ones we've got to watch out for. The police don't amount to a damn."

"How much cavalry is there?" I asked.

He shrugged. "There's a detail up north somewhere, about a half a troop I think. They come and go in John's City, but they've got too much territory to cover to stay there all the time."

"But the police will be there," I said.

He looked at me. "They'll be there. This Thornton I mentioned—Jake Thornton I think his name is—probably we'll find him in the City Bar. It's the only place in town that caters friendly to carpetbaggers."

I kept my voice level. "Do you know this Thornton when you see him?"

"I know him. I'll point him out to you when the time comes. It'll be a pleasure."

When we sighted the town, Pat took out his pistol to check the loading. I said, "Do you mind if I look at that?" He grinned and handed it over.

It wasn't much of a weapon—an old .36-caliber Cofer revolver. It was mounted on a grass frame and had a naked trigger without any guard. I recognized it as one of the guns that the Confederacy had bought from some outlaw arms dealers before the war, probably because the Yankees were afraid to shoot them and they were cheap. Across the top of the frame and barrel there was the mark: T. W. Cofer's Patent, Portsmouth, Va. I figured it was about an even bet that the cylinder would explode before you could get off the third shot.

I handed the pistol back to him. Then, on impulse, I drew one of those new deadly .44's that Pappy had given me and handed that over too.

"You'd better take this," I said, "in case you need a pistol."

He took it, admiring its velvety finish and fine balance. Then he grinned again and shoved it into his waistband. "Thanks, Tall. I guess with a pair of these between us, we haven't got anything to worry about."

In Pat Roark, I knew that I had one good man on my side. And one good man was all I needed.

We rode into Main Street in no particular formation, Pat and myself still in the van, and the others strung out in the rear. The town was ready for us. Everything that a bullet could hurt had been taken off the plankwalk and dragged inside. The street was almost deserted with only two or three horses standing at the block-long hitching rack. The last buckboard was just pulling out of the far end of the street as we came into town.

"We hit it right," Pat Roark said out of the side of his mouth. "The cavalry's not in town." He was moving his head slowly from side to side, not missing a thing. The thumb of his right hand, I noticed, was hooked in his cartridge belt, close to the butt of that new .44. When his head turned in my direction again he said, "You want to try the City Bar first?"

I nodded. The bar was a two-story-frame building standing on the corner, at the end of the block. When we reached it, I motioned for Pat to pull in, and I waited for the others to come up.

"Look," I said, as they grouped up around me, "I know this is none of your fight. I'm not asking you to come in with me, but I'd appreciate it if you kept watch outside here and see that nobody has a chance to get me and Pat in the back."

The men looked as if they wanted to object and join in on the fight, but nobody did. Jed Horner was the only one to say anything.

"Tall, we don't want you to get the idea that we're not with you. It's just like I said. . . ."

I left him talking and looped the bay's reins over the hitching rack. Pat was waiting for me on the plankwalk, his back against the building.

"I guess we might as well go in," I said.

"I guess so."

We kicked both batwings open at the same time and stepped inside. I was ready to draw from the first. I half expected a rifle, or maybe a shotgun, to be looking at us from over the bar. But there was nothing out of the way. Business was going on as usual. A couple of Davis policemen were having beer at the bar, a handful of turncoats and scalawags were in the back of the place where the gambling tables were. A roulette ball rattled like dry bones as the wheel spun, then the rattling stopped abruptly as the ball went into a slot. "Black, twenty-three," I heard somebody say.

"He isn't here," Pat said under his breath.

The bartender and two policemen were watching us carefully, but nobody made a move. There was something about the whole setup that I didn't like. I knew the bartender recognized me, and probably the two policemen as well. Then why didn't they do something? I was the one they wanted.

I went over every inch of the place with my eyes. There were nine men in the place, counting the bartender, a croupier, and a blackjack dealer. In the back of the place there were some stairs leading up to a small gallery jutting out over the gambling area, but there was nobody up there that I could see.

Without turning his head, Pat said, "You want to try the marshal's office?"

That would be the logical thing to do, but there was still something about this place that I didn't like. I walked over to the bar, and Pat stayed where he was, by the door. The roulette ball didn't rattle any more. The blackjack dealer paid off, raked his cards in, and waited. Everybody seemed to be waiting for something.

The bartender moved away from his two

police customers and came down to the end of the bar where I was.

"What'll you have, Tall?" he asked easily. Maybe a little too easily.

"Information," I said. "I'm looking for a man. A man by the name of Thornton."

He thought it over carefully. "You ought to try the marshal's office," he said finally. "That's his headquarters, not here."

He started to reach under the bar for something. A bar rag maybe, or some fresh glasses. But it could have been a shotgun.

I said, "Just keep your hands where I can see them." The two policemen were watching us, but so far they hadn't made any move toward their guns. One was short and big around the belly and hips. The other was big all over, maybe six feet tall and weighing around two hundred pounds. I called down the bar.

"You down there, where's your captain?"

The big one set his glass down. He looked at the short, fat one, and they both grinned quietly, as if they were enjoying a secret little joke just between the two of them.

"Down at the marshal's office, I reckon," the big one said.

He was lying. I was sure of that without knowing how I was sure. I could have killed him right there, both of them, with no regrets, no feeling at all. It could just as easily have been one of them, I thought. I'd never be able to look at a policeman again without thinking that, without feeling that sick anger blaze up and burn again.

And the two of them stood there grinning. The bartender and the others didn't do anything.

I heard myself saying, "Do you know who I am?"

The big man shrugged. The short one had another go at his drink.

"The name is Cameron," I said. "Tall Cameron. I hear you Davis police are looking for me."

They didn't even blink. I was hoping that they would make a move for their guns, but they didn't move at all.

The big man spoke mildly. "You must of heard wrong, kid. We don't want you."

"You're a damned liar," I said.

That jarred them for a minute. I watched the grins flicker and fade. They looked like they might go for their guns after all, and I was hoping they would. I was praying that they would give me an excuse to put a bullet . . . But that was as far as the thought went. Pat Roark stopped all thinking, all action that might have taken place, with:

"Tall, look out!"

I wheeled instinctively. I vaguely noticed that the bartender's hands had darted under the bar again and I caught the glint of a brutish sawed-off shotgun. And I was aware of the two police clawing for their own side guns—but all that was in the back of my mind. It was the gallery that held my attention.

The man up there had a rifle pointed at my chest. I didn't know how he got up there. Probably he had been up there all the time, waiting for me to turn my back. I knew, with the same instinct that told me the big policeman was lying, that the rifleman was Thornton. Before I had half whirled about I heard Pat Roark's .44 crash and saw the bartender sliding down behind the bar, the shotgun dropping from his limp fingers. Somehow my own gun was in my hand.

At a time like that you don't stop to think. Your mind seizes all the facts in a bunch and there is no time to separate them and decide where to act first. The two policemen were still clawing for their pistols, awkwardly. But the man on the gallery didn't have to draw. The rifle was ready, aimed, and I imagined that I could see the hammer falling. I forgot about the two policemen. The .44 bucked twice in my hand and the room jarred with the roaring. Two shots, I knew, would have to do it. I couldn't wait to see if the man would fall. The two policemen were awkward with pistols, but they weren't that awkward.

By the time I swung on them again, the big man's gun was just clearing his holster. I shot him in the belly and he slammed back against the bar, clawing at the neat black hole just above his belt buckle. The fat one didn't have a chance. He shouldn't have been allowed to carry a gun. He didn't know what to do with one. He was still fumbling with the hammer as my bullet buried itself in the flabby folds of fat under his chin. He reeled back and blood began to come out of his mouth.

Pat Roark shouted, "The door, Tall. I'll keep them covered while you back out."

But it wasn't over yet. Thornton, the man on the gallery, was still alive. He was on his knees clutching his middle, and bright red blood oozed between his fingers. I counted my shots in my mind. Two at Thornton, one at the big man, and one at the fat one. That was four. I had one bullet left. A six-shooter is actually a six-shooter only for fools and dime novels. There's always an empty chamber to rest the hammer on when the pistol is in the holster. I leveled the pistol at Thornton and fired my last bullet. I thought, this one's for you, Pa. It's too late to do you any good, but it's the only thing I know to do.

Thornton came crashing down from the gallery, falling across a poker table like a rag doll, then dumping into a shapeless heap on the floor.

I stood there breathing hard, the empty pistol still in my hand.

Pat said, "Tall, for God's sake, come on!"

But I waited a few more seconds, almost hoping that Thornton would move again so I could go over and beat the life out of him, the way he had done with Pa. But he didn't move. His eyes had that fixed glassy stare that always means the same thing. I had done all I could do.

The spectators—the carpetbaggers, and white trash, and scalawags—still hadn't moved. Their faces were pale with shock as they stared at the lifeless figures on the floor. That wasn't the way they had expected it to work out. They had been confident that their man could kill me easily from his place on the gallery, but now that it hadn't worked out that way, they weren't sure what they ought to do.

My pistol was empty, but they didn't realize that, so I kept it trained on them.

I said tightly, "Take a good look at the man that killed my father. Being a member of the Davis police didn't save his dirty hide; that's something the rest of you might remember."

"Tall," Pat Roark said again. I started backing out; keeping them covered with my empty pistol.

Outside, we hit the saddles and our horses lit out for the far end of the street in one startled jump. The other ranchers fell in behind us, fogging it out of John's City.

We traveled north toward Garner's Store for maybe two miles, and then the ranchers started splitting up, cutting out from the main body and heading toward their own outfits. They were nervous men for the most part, and I could see by their faces that they thought they had been suckered into something that they hadn't bargained for. Well, I thought, to hell with them. If they were afraid to fight for their own kind, there was nothing I could do for them.

By the time we reached the store, Pat Roark was the only one still with me. As we let our horses drink at the trough, Pat stood up in his stirrups, looking back along the road.

"The police don't seem so damned anxious to follow us," he said, still with that thin grin of his.

I wasn't worrying about the police. It was the cavalry that was going to give us trouble when they heard about it. We hitched our horses and went inside the store.

Old man Garner wasn't glad to see us. Things had a way of happening to people who helped fugitives. A man's store could burn down, or he could get robbed blind. All kinds of things could happen.

He came slowly out of the dark interior of the store. He could smell trouble and he didn't like it.

"Tall, you get out of here," he said gruffly. "I know the police are after you; so don't tell me different."

"I'm not going to tell you different, Mr. Garner. But they won't be along for awhile. Is my credit still good?"

He grunted. "I reckon. If it'll get you out of here."

We got a dozen boxes of .44 cartridges, some meal, salt, and a slab of bacon. "If you don't see me for a while," I said, "you can get the money from Ma."

Money won't do me no good," he said peevishly, "if the police catch me helpin' you out this way. Now scat, both of you." Then on impulse, he went behind the counter and came out with a small tin skillet and a bag of ground coffee. "You might as well take these too, as long as you're gettin' everything else you want."

I took the things and wrapped them up in newspapers. Old man Garner didn't like turncoats any better than most people, and he wasn't as put out about helping us as he tried to make us believe. As we started back for our horses, I said, "When the bluebellies come along you might just mention that you saw us heading east, toward Indian Ridge."

At last his curiosity got the best of him. "Did you . . . kind of get things settled up, Tall?"

"As well as it can be settled," I said. "Remember, east, toward Indian Ridge."

"I won't forget. Now go on, get out of here."

We headed northwest along the road to the Bannerman ranch for a mile or more, and then cut due west on some hard shale that would be difficult to trail us on. We moved on up to some low rolling hills and finally reached the arroyo. I looked at Pat Roark.

He was a funny guy. And, as we headed toward Daggert's Road, I began to wonder just why he was sticking his neck out this way. The Roarks had a small one-horse outfit over east of John's City—that is the old man had the outfit. Pat, I remembered, was the youngest of five sons, and the others had drifted off to other parts of Texas before the war and hadn't been heard from since. Pat's old man had never amounted to much. What little money he made by brush popping went mostly for whiskey. Pat had never had the money to attend old Professor Bigloe's academy like the rest of us.

So maybe he was just looking for a chance to get away from John's City, and he figured this was it. Whatever the reason, I was glad to have him along.

We rode down the arroyo until we came to the cutaway that Ray Novak and I had ducked into before. Pat had never seen the place. I held some of the vines and scrub trees back and motioned him to go on in, and he said, "Well, I'll be damned." He looked around appreciatively as I covered the entrance again. "So this is Daggert's Road," he said. "Well, it'll be nearly hell for anybody to find us in a place like this."

I said, "It'll do for tonight. We'll go on up to the old cabin and stay there. If things look all right I'll ride over to our place. There's that red horse of mine. I sure would hate to leave him behind."

It was clear that we weren't going to be able to stay around John's City for long. Pretty soon the cavalry would be cutting tracks all over northern Texas looking for us, and it wouldn't be the work gang if they caught us this time. It would be a hanging.

Four men I had killed in as many days—but even that didn't bother me. They had all needed killing. Nobody held it against you for killing a horse thief like Creyton. And Thornton and the other two policemen weren't any different. I would have to hide out for a while, until the carpetbaggers were out of Texas. A year, maybe. Two at the most, because Texans wouldn't stand for that kind of treatment for long. Then I could come back and stand trial. No jury of John's City ranchers would convict me for what I had done.

There were only two things that bothered me. How would Ma get along without me or Pa to look after her? And Laurin—it was going to be a hard year, or two years, being away from her.

"Is that the place?" Pat Roark pointed toward the sagging shack at the end of the trail.

I nodded. "I guess that'll hold us for a few hours. We can fill our bellies and rest our horses, and figure out where to go."

Pat laughed. "While the bluebellies cut tracks all over Indian Ridge."

Nothing seemed to bother him. If he regretted having to pull out like this, without even a chance to say good-by to his old man, it didn't show on that grinning face of his. He seemed to have completely forgotten the fact that he had killed a man a short time back.

We picketed our horses behind the shack where there was plenty of new green grass. By the time we got our saddles off and lugged our supplies inside it was almost dark. I wondered about making a fire, then decided we might as well have a hot meal while we had a chance.

Later, as we sat on the dirt floor eating dripping pieces of bacon and hoecake, Pat said, "I know it's none of my business, and don't get the idea I'm complaining, but don't you think it's a little dangerous staying this close to John's City?"

"I told you I didn't want to leave that red horse behind," I said. "Hell, the cavalry won't find us here. They'll be cutting tracks on Indian Ridge, like you said."

Pat shrugged. "All right. I was just thinking."

Probably he knew the real reason I didn't want to pull out right away. It was Laurin, not that red horse. But he didn't say any more about it.

As night came on, we put the fire out, and my ears seemed to grow sharper as darkness closed in. The moan of the wind and the rattle of grass made startling sounds in the night. Once I got up abruptly and went outside with my gun in my hand when I heard a movement in the brush. But it turned out to be a swamp rabbit making his bed for the night under a clump of mesquite.

Pat said, "You'd better go see about that horse, if you're so almighty anxious about him."

He didn't say I was getting the jumps, but that was what he meant. All the things that had happened today began to grow and magnify in the darkness. I wouldn't let myself think about Pa. I had done all I could. He would understand that, wherever he was.

But Laurin was something else. She hadn't wanted me to go to town in the first place. What was she going to say about those bluebellies that I hoped were burning in hell by now? Somehow, I had to explain that to her before I went away. And I wasn't sure how I was going to do it.

I said, "Maybe you're right, Pat. I'll see about the horse. Then maybe we'll cover some ground before daybreak."

"Whatever you say." He had torn off a piece of his shirttail and was using it to clean that new .44 I had given him.

"You'll be all right here," I said. "The cavalry won't get around tonight."

"Don't worry about me." He looked up. "You're the one that better watch out the bluebellies don't get you."

It was completely dark now. I went outside and got the bay saddled, and Pat came to the door and watched as I rode off.

It wasn't a smart thing to do, I knew that. Pappy Garret would have skinned me alive for pulling a fool stunt like that . . . but it was one of those things that I had to see all the way through. Before long—if I didn't set things straight with Laurin—I'd be snapping at Pat, and we'd end up the same as me and Ray Novak, riding our own separate trails. And I needed Pat. One man wasn't any good on the run. Pappy had been proof of that. It occurred to me that I had already learned to think the way Pappy Garret thought. I didn't really give a damn for Pat Roark, but I could use him, and that was what I meant to do.

That shocked me for a moment. A few days ago I had never even thought of killing a man, and now I had four to my credit, a longer string than a lot of well-known badmen could boast. I felt nothing for them. They could have been calf-killing coyotes, and not human beings like myself.

I tried to work back in my mind and find the beginning of it. Paul Creyton—there was nothing I could have done about that. He had been trying to steal my horse, and that was reason enough for killing anybody in this country. And Thornton—nobody could blame me for that. And the other two—they had been pulling on me, and if I hadn't killed them they would have killed me. I hadn't started any of it. They had all brought it on themselves.

But still I could taste the uneasy tang of doubt, and I wondered if it all would seem so clear-cut and inevitable to Laurin as it did to me.

Coming out of the hills, I rode straight east, heading for our place. I would have a hard time explaining it to Pat, if I came back without that red horse, and, besides, for some strange reason, I wanted to put off seeing Laurin until the very last.

There was no sign of cavalry or police as I crossed the open range. Probably, I thought, the Cameron ranch would be the last place they would look for me, especially if old man Garner had told them we were headed for Indian Ridge.

The ranch house was dark when I got there. The only light I could see was in the bunkhouse. When we reached the rear of the ranch yard, I got down and led the bay toward the barn where I figured Red would be.

"Tall."

It was just a whisper, but there in the darkness it came at me like a bullet. I dropped the reins and wheeled.

"It's me, Tall! My God, be careful with that gun!"

It was Bucky Stow, coming from the far side of the barn. I didn't remember pulling my pistol, but there it was, in my hand, the hammer pulled back and ready to fall. I heard somebody breathing hard, breath whistling through his teeth. After a moment I realized it was me.

"You want to be careful how you slip up on people," I said weakly. Bucky would never know how close he came to being number five on my string. I shoved the pistol back in my holster.

"Tall, what in hell are you doin' here, anyway? There's cavalry and police all over this part of Texas."

"I came after that red horse," I said. "Is he ready to go?"

Bucky screwed up his face. "I reckon," he said. "But he could stand fattening up. A horse like Red ain't supposed to take that kind of treatment."

"Never mind about Red, he can take it. Is Ma doing all right?"

"She's over at the Novak place now," he said, rubbing his chin sadly. "She kind of figured that maybe you'd come back here. She wanted me to tell you to come to Virginia as soon as you get a chance."

I looked at him. "Virginia?"

"She's selling the ranch and moving back there with her people. Runnin' a ranch is too big a job for a woman. And since your pa . . ."

His voice trailed off, but I knew what he was thinking. Now that Pa was gone, and I couldn't stay here to help her, there was nothing else for her to do. It hurt me at first, thinking about giving up this ranch that Pa had worked so hard for. But Ma had never really liked it. She only wanted to be where Pa was. It was the best thing, I thought, for her to move back with her own people until I could clear myself with the Texas courts.

I said, "Tell her I'm all right, Bucky. Tell her not to worry about me, and I'll see her in Virginia as soon as this thing blows over."

Bucky said, "Sure, Tall. Now I'll get that horse for you."

He went in the barn and in a few minutes he came back with Red, all saddled and ready to go. I slapped the horse's glossy rump. "You ready to travel, boy? You got your belly full of corn?"

Red switched his head around and nuzzled the front of my shirt. I thought wryly, that's the first sincere gesture of welcome I've had since I got back.

CHAPTER SIX

I didn't try to go to the Novaks and say good-by to Ma. That would be pushing my luck too far. I got on Red and we headed west again, crossing the Bannerman wagon road just in case the cavalry was up in that direction, then we went north, cross country, until the big ranch house and barns loomed up in the darkness. I didn't have any guarantee that there weren't any soldiers in one of those barns just waiting for me to pull a fool stunt like this, but that was a chance I had to take. As I got closer, I saw that there was a light in the back of the house, in the kitchen.

I left Red at the side of the house, and the back door opened.

"Joe, is that you?"

Then I stepped into the light, and Laurin gasped. Her hands and arms were white with flour, and there was a pale powdery smudge on the side of her nose. She was just beginning to bake the week's supply of bread.

"Tall!" Her voice was frightened. "Tall, you can't come here. The cavalry left only an hour ago, looking for you."

"The cavalry can't keep me away from you," I said. "Nothing can."

Quickly, she dusted her hands and arms on her apron and came down the steps. I put my hands on her shoulders and I could feel her shiver as I drew her close and held her tight. "Oh, Tall," she cried, "it's no good. Meeting this way, in darkness, afraid to be seen together."

I kissed her lightly and we stood there clinging to each other. I pressed her head to

my shoulder and the clean smell of her hair worked on me like fever. "I'll come back," I said. "It won't always be like this." Then I asked the question that I was half afraid to ask. "Laurin, will you wait for me? Will you trust me to straighten things out in my own way?"

For a moment she didn't say anything. Her body was rigid against me and I knew that she was crying.

"You know I'll wait," she said at last. "Forever, I suppose, if I have to. It's just that I'm afraid . . . something awful and wrong is happening to us."

I knew she was thinking about those three men. . . . She didn't know about the fourth. "Can't you see, I had to do it?" I said. "I couldn't just stand by and let them get away with it—doing what they did. You see that, don't you?"

"I don't know," she breathed "I just don't know."

"I'm not going to get into any more trouble," I said. "Don't be afraid of that. I'll join a trail herd and go up to Kansas until the bluebellies are out of Texas courts. Then I'll come back and stand trial."

She raised her head and looked at me for a long time. And at last she began to believe it.

"I'll wait," she said quietly. "If you'll do that, I'll wait as long as I need to. It won't be too long."

That was the way I remembered her, the way she looked as she said, "I'll wait." And then her face softened, and for a moment it seemed that she was almost happy. "I'll get you some bacon," she said, "and some fresh bread. You'll need something to eat while you're traveling."

"We'll get supplies," I said. I didn't want to go, but the time had come and I couldn't put if off any longer. Then I kissed her—hard enough to last as long as it had to last. "Don't you worry," I said. "I'll come back." It seemed that I was saying that more often than was necessary to convince her. Maybe I was trying to convince myself.

I looked back once as I rode away, and she was still standing there with the lamplight streaming out the door and falling over her like a veil of fine silk. She half lifted her hand, as if to wave, and then let it drop. After a while, she went back into the house and that was the last I saw of her.

It was a quiet trip riding back to the shack. There was no sign of soldiers or police anywhere, and I made up my mind to get out of this part of Texas as soon as I got back to where Pat Roark was. I was afraid that we had stretched our luck about as far as it would go.

I judged that it was about midnight by the time we reached the hills. I nudged Red down into the gully that was Daggert's Road and stopped for a moment to listen, but there was still no sound except the faint night wind and the faraway bark of a coyote. We had almost reached the cabin when Red started shying away from something in the darkness.

I pulled up again and listened. There still wasn't anything that I could see or hear, but that didn't mean that there was nothing out there in the darkness. I felt of Red's ears. They were pricked up, stiff, his head cocked to one side. I reached far over and felt of his muzzle. It was hot and dry.

That worried me. Normally a horse's nose is cool and moist, it's only when he senses danger that it gets that hot, dry feel. Then I felt little ripples of nervousness in the long muscles of his neck. I knew something was wrong. But before I could do anything about it, a voice shouted:

"Throw up your hands, Cameron. We've got you surrounded!"

Instinctively, I drove the steel in Red's ribs and he jumped forward with a startled snort. I didn't know who was doing the shouting, but I could guess. I dumped out of the saddle as we neared the cabin, and Red spurted on like a scared ghost, heading for higher ground. I hit the ground hard, rolled, and scrambled for the door of the shack. If I had stayed on Red, they would have cut me down before he could have taken a dozen jumps, and besides that gully of a road led to a dead end about a hundred rods up in the hills.

A rifle bellowed in the darkness, another one answered it, and then the whole night seemed to explode to life. Carbines, I thought as I scrawled the last few yards to the doorway on my hands and knees. Cavalry carbines. Why the hell doesn't Pat shoot back?

Then my foot hit something soft and wet and sticky, and I had my answer. Pat Roark was dead. I didn't have to make an inspection to know that. I tried hurriedly to roll him over and it was like rolling a limp sack of wet grain. I let him stay where he was, got the door closed, and fumbled in the darkness for the window.

The shooting had stopped now. They saw that they had missed me on the first try, and now they were ready to think up something else. I wondered why they hadn't placed a man in the shack to shoot me as I came in—but I got my answer to that, too, as I was fumbling around looking for an extra box of cartridges. There *was* a man in here.

But he was dead, the same as Pat. The hard-visored forage cap on the floor told me that he was a soldier, probably a cavalryman. I felt for his head and jerked my hand back as I touched the clammy sticky mess that had leaked out of the hole in his skull. Well, they had done a good job on each other, I thought grimly.

I went back to the window and tried to see something. They hadn't started to move in yet. Probably, they were in positions on high ground overlooking the cabin, but I hadn't had time to notice that much when the shooting was going on. There was a little clearing all around the shack and I could watch three sides from the windows and door. But the rear was blind.

I took another look to make sure that they hadn't decided to rush me, then I went to the rear wall and began to knock out the 'dobe plaster between the logs. In a minute I had a porthole cleaned out big enough to shoot through and see through. But I wasn't sure how much good that was going to do me. I couldn't be in four places at once.

"Come out with your hands up, Cameron," the same voice shouted, "and we'll see you get a fair trial in court!"

I could imagine what kind of a trial I'd get in a carpetbag court, after killing three state policemen. I went back to the west window and looked out carefully. The voice, I judged, was coming from behind a rock up above the gully. An officer, probably.

"This is your last chance, Cameron!"

"Go to hell," I shouted. "If you want me, come and get me."

Nothing happened, and I began to wonder what they were waiting on. They had me surrounded. I wasn't questioning their word about that. Then why didn't they close in and begin shooting me to pieces? That's what I would have done if I had been in their place. Or maybe burn the cabin down. That would make a clean job of it.

But they were still waiting on something. I felt my way across the shack again and got my other pistol out of Pat Roark's dead hand. I rolled the soldier over against the wall to get him out of the way, and, as I was giving him the last nudge with my boot, the answer came to me.

The reason they were reluctant to start any wild shooting or burning was that they thought their man was still alive. I went back and inspected Pat Roark a little closer this time. Sure enough, he was still warm, lying there in the doorway with a bullet in his gut. It all began to make sense now. I could almost see it, the way it must have worked.

Pat had been out of the cabin for some reason when the ambush had been set, and when he came back, there was the soldier waiting to take him. I could imagine the way Pat Roark's face must have looked. He probably never even lost his grin as he jerked that .44 and shot the trooper's brains out. But not before he got a carbine slug in the gut for his trouble.

The others must have been wondering where I was and had set themselves to catch me when I came back—if I came back. Anyway, there was the dead cavalryman, and Pat, who must have lived two or three hours with a hot lead slug in his belly, waiting for me to come back and save him. But I hadn't got back in time. And I couldn't have saved him anyway. I couldn't even save myself now.

The best I could do was to try to keep things going the way Pat had started it, by making the cavalry believe that their man was still alive.

"All right," the voice behind the rock called. "We gave you your chance, Cameron. Now, we're coming after you."

I shouted, "Try it and this trooper of yours gets a bullet in his brain."

I had guessed right. That had them worried.

"How do we know he's not already dead?" the voice wanted to know.

"Why don't you come in and see for yourself?"

But they didn't accept the invitation. They were going to think it over a while longer, and in the meantime I had some time for thinking myself. I wondered how they found this shack so quick. Probably some turncoat had told them about it. I kept forgetting that Texas was full of traitors. I remembered Pappy Garret saying once, "One mistake is all a man is allowed when he's on the run." It looked like I had made mine early.

I kept moving from window to window, from the door to the rear of the shack, but I still couldn't see anything to shoot at. The waiting began to get on my nerves. I couldn't very well make a deal with them, I couldn't get away without a horse, and from the way Red was going the last time I saw him I guessed he must be close to Kansas by now.

So we waited some more. From time to time the voice would yell for me to come out or they were coming after me. But they kept holding off. Then, as the first pale light began to show in the east, I knew they had finally made up their minds. I could hear them moving around out there, and the officer giving orders in a low, hushed voice. They had decided their man was dead. There was no use for them to wait any longer.

I could hear them spreading out, circling the cabin. It was light enough to see by now, but they were behind rocks or brush, waiting for the signal to rush. I waited by the west window, thinking, so this is the way it's going to end—when the shooting and yelling started at the rear of the cabin. I jumped over to the rear wall and got a pistol through the crack. I shot twice before I saw that there was nothing to shoot at.

It was a trick. They had planted two or three men back there to draw my attention while the others started rushing from the front and two sides. I wheeled and headed back for one of the windows, but I could already see that it was too late. They were almost on me before I could get a shot off. I remember thinking coolly all the time, I'll have time to get one of them, maybe two.

They'll have to pay for me if they get me. And I fired point blank into a cavalryman's face. The man running beside him fell away to one side, hit the ground and scrambled for the cabin. Behind me, I heard the others closing in on my blind sides.

I wheeled away from the window and took a shot out of the door. Then I saw a crazy thing. One of them stumbled, grabbed his belly and fell—not the one I was shooting at, but another one. Then I saw another one fall, and another one.

I didn't try to understand what was happening. For a moment I stood there dumb with surprise, and, by that time, panic had taken hold of the cavalry and they scrambled again for cover, what was left of them. I circled the inside of the cabin, counting the soldiers that hadn't made it back to cover. There were six of them. That stunned me. I had accounted for only one of them. I was sure of that. Then who had killed the other five?

Probably the cavalry was wondering the same thing. I could hear the officer shouting angrily, trying to get his men grouped for another rush. And after a minute they came again. Their force was cut to half this time, but they came running and yelling from all sides. Before I could raise my pistols, one went down. Then another one.

I didn't even bother to shoot again. The cavalry had had enough. They turned and scattered like scared rabbits, and there wasn't any officer to pull them together this time. The officer, a lieutenant, lay outside my window with a rifle bullet in his brain.

It had happened too fast to try to understand it. I only knew that there were eight dead men outside the shack, and I had killed only one of them. I heard the cavalry detail —what was left of it—scrambling down in the gully, and pretty soon there was the clatter of hoofs and the rattle of chain and metal as they lit out for the south. By this time they probably figured that the cabin was haunted, that there was a devil in there instead of an eighteen-year-old kid. And I wasn't so sure that they were so far wrong.

I should have known, I suppose, with that kind of shooting—but Pappy Garret never entered my mind until I saw him coming down from the high ground, astride that big black horse with the white diamond in the center of its forehead. He was riding slouched in the saddle, looking more like a circuit-riding preacher than anything else, except for that deadly new rifle, still cradled in the crook of his arm. In one hand he held a pair of reins, and that big red horse of mine was coming along behind.

Pappy rode up in the clearing in front of the cabin, looking at me mildly, with that half grin of his. Then he snapped the leaf sight down on his rifle, and sighed. Like a woodsman putting away his ax after a good day's work.

"Son," he said soberly, "you sure as hell have got a lot to learn."

"Where did you come from?" I blurted. "How did you know I was here?"

"Now don't start asking a lot of damnfool questions," he said. "You'd better just climb on this horse, because we've got ourselves some hard riding to do."

It was incredible that Pappy would stick his neck out like this to help a kid like me. But there he was. And if I wanted to be smart, I'd just be thankful and let it go at that.

I managed to say, "Thanks, Pappy. If you ever need a favor . . . well, I owe you one."

I went in the cabin and gathered up the extra cartridges and grub and rolled it all up in a blanket. In a few minutes I had it all tied behind the saddle and was ready to go.

Pappy looked at me, and then at Red. He said, "We'll see now if that red horse was worth killing for." Then he added, "He'd better be."

For the next four days, I learned what hard riding really was. Pappy had it worked out to a science. Walk, canter, gallop. Walk, canter, gallop. Rest your horse five minutes every hour. Water him every chance you got, but be careful not to let him have too much at once. Steal grain for him. Raid cornfields or homestead barns. Take wild chances—chances that a man wouldn't dare take for money—just to get a few ears of corn for your horse.

We didn't have time to eat, ourselves. The horses were the important things. I wanted to stop and cook some bacon, but Pappy said no. He had some jerky that he saved for times like this, so we chewed that while we rode. We traveled cross country, never touching the stage roads except to cross them. Skirting all towns and settlements. Avoiding communities where we saw telegraph wires strung up.

Then, on the fourth day, we turned north and Pappy said we were coming into Red River Station.

But, long before we got there, we could see the red dust boiling up like low-hanging clouds. And as we got closer we could hear the bawling of the cattle and the hoarse cursing of the trail hands. At last we pulled up on a small rise and looked down on the constant stream of animals and men. It didn't look like an easy way to get to Kansas, but it was the best way for us. The law didn't bother trail herds. The big ranchers and cattle buyers saw to that. Their job was to get cattle to the railheads in Kansas, and they weren't particular about the men they hired, as long as they got the job done.

"Well, Pappy?" I said.

Pappy shook his head. "This is still dangerous country. Probably those cattle were gathered around Uvalde. They'll travel along the eastern line of army posts—Terrel, McKavett, Concho—until they get to Red River Station. We'll push on east and catch a herd coming up the Brazos."

So we headed east and north, skirting the main trails until we got to Red River Station. The Station was a wild, restless place, milling with bawling cattle, and wild-eyed trail bosses trying to keep their herds in check until their time came to make the crossing. Herds from all over Texas gathered here to make their push through Indian Territory —shaggy, brush cattle from along the Nueces, as wild and murderous as grizzlies; scrawny, hungry-looking steers all the way from Christi; fat, well-fed ones from the Brazos. Wild cattle and the near-wild men that drove them, all took advantage of the Station's limited facilities to break the monotonous, fatiguing routine of trail life.

The only building there was a long, cigar-box-shaped log hut along the river bank, and Pappy and I made for it. There was no sign of police or cavalry, and, when I mentioned it to Pappy, he laughed drily.

"They wouldn't do any good here. In the first place, it would take a regiment of cavalry and the whole damn state police force to make an impression on a bunch of drovers. Anyway, all a man has to do is jump across the river and he's in Indian Territory where the police couldn't follow him."

There was a long bar inside the Station's one building, where men stood two deep waiting for their wildcat whiskey at two bits a drink. There was gambling in the back of the place, and half-breed saloon girls moving among the customers, promoting one kind of deal or another. Pappy and I waited at the bar until the bartender got around to us.

"Well, son, what do you think of it?"

"I'm not sure," I said. "I never saw anything like it before."

Pappy grinned slightly. "Wait until you see Abilene." He picked up a bottle and we went to a table in the back of the place. It felt good to sit down in a chair for a change, instead of a saddle. I didn't feel sleepy. You got the idea that nobody ever slept in a place like this. There was too much excitement for that.

I said, "Do you think we'll be safe here?"

"As safe as we'd be anywhere," Pappy said. "As long as we don't overdo it. I'll look around and pick out a herd to hook up with before long. Abilene beats this place. Besides, the marshal there is a friend of mine."

For the past four days, I hadn't had time to think. And now I was too tired to think. The fight with the cavalry seemed a long way in the past. It was hard to believe that it had happened.

We stayed at Red River Station that night, spreading our blanket rolls on the ground, the way the drovers did, and the next day Pappy went to see about a job for us.

That was the day I met Bat Steuber, a wiry little remuda man from an outfit down on the Brazos. A remuda man, I figured, might be able to rustle up some grain for Red and that big black of Pappy's, if he was handled right.

The way to handle him, it turned out, was with whiskey. I bought him three drinks of wildcat with Pappy's money and he couldn't do enough for me. He took me down to where the outfit was camped and got some shelled corn out of the forage wagon. Or rather, he was about to get the corn, when a man came up behind the wagon and cut it short.

"The boss says look after the horses," the man said.

He was a big man, his shoulders and chest bulging his faded blue shirt. His eyes were red-rimmed from riding long days in the drag, and his mouth was tight, looking as if he hadn't smiled for a long time.

Bat Steuber said, "Hell, Buck, I finished my shift. It's your . . ."

The man cut him off again. "I said see about the horses."

The voice cracked and Steuber jumped to his feet. "Sure, Buck, if you say so."

The man watched vacantly as Steuber went back to the rear where the remuda was ringed in; then he turned to me. I had a crazy idea that I had seen the man before, but at the same time I knew I hadn't. There was something about him that was familiar. His eyes maybe. I had seen eyes like those somewhere, clear, and blue, and deadly. He wore matched .44's converted, the same as mine, and I didn't have to be told that he knew how to use them. There are some things you know without having it proved to you.

"What's your name, kid?" he asked flatly.

"Cameron," I said. "Talbert Cameron. I don't think I caught yours."

He looked as if he hadn't heard me. "You're the kid that rode in with Pappy Garret yesterday, ain't you?"

He was asking a lot of questions, in a country where it wasn't polite to ask a stranger too many questions.

But I said, "That's right."

I thought something happened to those eyes of his. He said flatly, "When you see Pappy, tell him I'm looking for him to kill him."

For a moment, I just stood there with my back against the wagon wheel. He said it so quietly and matter-of-factly that you wondered afterward if he had spoken at all.

I tried to keep my voice as level as his. "Don't you think that'll be kind of a job. Men have tried it before, I hear."

His voice took an edge. "You just tell him what I said, kid. That way maybe you'll live to be a man some day." He turned abruptly and started to walk away. Then he turned again. "Just tell him Buck Creyton is ready

any time he wants to show his guts. If there is any question as to why I want to kill him, you might ask if he remembers my brother, Paul."

He was gone before I could think of anything to say. Buck Creyton—a name as deadly as a soft-nosed bullet. A name as well known as Pappy Garret's, when the talk got around to gunfighters.

I thought, have you lost your guts? Why didn't you tell him that you were the one that killed his brother, and not Pappy?

I didn't know. I just thought of those deadly blue eyes and felt my insides turn over. He would kill me without batting an eye. Then I thought, just like I killed his brother, and the three policemen, and the cavalryman.

I walked over to Red and swung up to the saddle. "Come on, boy," I said. "Let's get out of here."

CHAPTER SEVEN

I waited for Pappy at the camp we had made, up the river from the herds. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to run or to stay with Pappy and see the thing through with Creyton. Maybe I would have the decision made for me, if Pappy ran into Creyton before he got back to camp.

Then—out of nowhere—I heard the words: Don't worry about me. I'm not going to get into any more trouble. They sounded well worn and bitter. They were words I had said to Laurin, and a few hours later I had killed another man, a soldier.

Now I had the government officers on my tail as well as the state police. Laurin . . . I'd hardly had time to think about her until now. I could close my eyes and see her. I could almost touch her. But not quite.

I picked up a rock and flung it viciously out of sheer helplessness and anger.

I hadn't asked to get into trouble. It was like playing a house game with the deck stacked against you. The longer you played, the harder you tried to get even, and the more you lost. Where would it stop? Could it be stopped at all?

I realized what I was doing, and changed my thinking. You'd go crazy thinking that way. Or lose your guts maybe, and get yourself killed. And I wasn't planning on getting killed, by Buck Creyton, or the police, or anybody else. I had to keep living and get back to John's City. I had to get back to Laurin.

They didn't really have anything against me—except, of course, that one trooper that I had shot up at Daggert's Cabin. But a jury of ranchers wouldn't hang me for shooting a bluebelly. Just lay quiet, I told myself, and wait for the right time.

But there was still Buck Creyton to think about. My mind kept coming back to him. I wondered vaguely if Paul Creyton had any more kinfolks that would be bent on avenging him. Or the policemen, or the trooper.

At last, when I finally went back to the beginning of the trouble, there was Ray Novak. He was the one who had started it all, I realized then that I hated Ray Novak more than anybody else, and sooner or later . . .

But caution tugged again in the back of my mind. Lie quiet, it said. Don't ask for more trouble.

Pappy came in a little before sundown, covered with trail dust and looking dog tired. I didn't know how to break it to him about Buck Creyton. I wasn't sure what he would do when he found out that Creyton was after him for something he hadn't done.

"I got us fixed up with a job of work," he said, wetting his bandanna from his saddle canteen and wiping it over his dirty face. "The Box-A outfit needs a pair of swing riders to see them through the Territory. Forty dollars a month if we use our own horses. That all right with you?"

"I guess so," I said.

He wrung his bandanna out and tied it around his neck again. "You don't sound very proud of it," he said. But he grinned as he said it. I could see that Pappy was in good spirits. "It seemed like I rode half way to the Rio Grande looking for that outfit." He went on. "But it's what we want. The trail boss is a friend of mine and he don't allow anybody to cut his help for strays. Cavalry included." He patted his belly. "Say, is there any of that bacon left?"

"Sure," I said. I got the slab and cut it up while Pappy made the fire. I decided I'd better let him eat first before saying anything.

It was almost dark by the time we finished eating. Pappy sat under a cottonwood as I wiped the skillet, staring mildly across the wide, sandy stretch of land that was Red River. There was almost no river to it, just a little stream in the middle of that wide, dusty bed. Quicksand, not water, was what made it dangerous to cross.

I put the skillet with the blanket roll and decided that now was as good a time as any.

"Pappy," I said, "we're in trouble."

He made one of those sounds of his that passed for laughter. "We *were* in trouble," he said. "Not any more. We've got clear sailing now, all the way to Kansas."

"I don't mean with the police. With Buck Creyton."

I saw him stiffen for a moment. Slowly, he began to relax. "Just what do you mean by that?" he asked. Some people, when they get suddenly mad, they yell, or curse, or maybe hit the closest thing they can find. But not Pappy. His voice took on a soft, velvety quality, almost like the purring of a big cat. That's the way his voice was now.

But I had gone too far to back down. I said, "I saw him today. He's working with one of the outfits getting ready to make the crossing. He's looking for you, Pappy. He says he's going to kill you."

Pappy sat very still. Then he said, "You yellow little bastard."

The words hit like a slap in the face. I wheeled on him, my hands about to jump for my guns, but then I remembered what Pappy had done to Ray Novak, and dropped them to my side.

"Look, Pappy," I said tightly, "you've got this figured all wrong."

He didn't even hear me. "You told him I was the one that killed Paul, didn't you?"

"I didn't tell him a thing," I said.

"I'll bet! You didn't tell him that *you* did it." Slowly he got to his feet, his hands never moving more than an inch or so from the butts of his pistols.

I suppose I was scared at first, but, surprisingly, that went away. I began to breathe normally again. If he was determined to think that I had crossed him, there was nothing I could do about it. If he was determined to force a shoot-out, there was nothing I could do about that, either. He was standing in a half crouch, like a lean, hungry cat about to spring.

"You yellow little bastard," he said again.

I said, "Don't say that any more, Pappy. I'm warning you, don't use that word again."

I think that surprised him. He thought I was afraid of him, and now it kind of jarred him to find out I wasn't. Pappy was good with a gun. I'd seen him draw and I knew. Maybe he was better than me—a hundred times better, maybe—but he hadn't proven it yet.

He said, "I picked up you. I went to the trouble to save your lousy hide, and this is what I get. This tears it wide open, son. This finishes us."

"If you're not going to listen to reason," I said, "then go ahead and make your move. You've got a big name as a gunslinger. Let's see how good you really are."

He laughed silently. "I wouldn't want to take advantage of a kid."

I was mad now. He hadn't given me a chance to explain because he thought he could ride his reputation over me. I said, "Don't worry about the advantage. If you think you've got me scared, if you think I'm going to beg out of a shooting, then you're crazy as hell."

He still didn't move. "You think you're something, don't you, son? Because you got lucky with Paul Creyton, because you killed a couple of state policemen who didn't rightly know which end of a gun to hold, you think you're a gunman. You've got a lot to learn, son."

"Draw, then," I almost shouted. "If you think you're so damned good and I'm so bad. Draw and get it over with. You're the one that got your back up."

For a moment I thought he was going to do it. I could see the smoky haze of anger lying far back in those pale eyes of his. I felt muscles and nerves tightening in my arms and shoulders, waiting for Pappy to make a move.

Suddenly he began to relax. The haze went out of his eyes and he sat slowly down by the cottonwood.

"What the hell got into us anyway?" he asked, shaking his head in amazement. "Hell, I don't want to kill you. I don't think you want to kill me. Sit down, son, until the heat wears off."

It took me a long time to relax, but I didn't feel very big because I had made Pappy Garret back down. I knew it wasn't because he was afraid of me.

"Go on," Pappy said softly, "sit down and let's think this thing over."

The anger that had been burning so hot only a minute ago had now burned itself out. Me and Pappy getting ready to kill each other—the thought of that left me cold and empty. Pappy had saved my life, he had given me a chance to live so that some day I could go back to Laurin . . .

"It's just as well we got that out of our systems," Pappy said at last. "I'm sorry about the things I said. I didn't mean them."

That was probably the first time Pappy had ever apologized to anybody for anything. And he was right. It was just as well that we got it out of our systems. Sooner or later, when two men live by their guns, they are bound to come together. But there was slight chance of it happening again. You don't usually buck a man if you know he isn't afraid of you.

Pappy got out his tobacco and corn shuck papers, giving all his attention to building a cigarette. After he had finished, he tossed the makings to me.

I said, "Hell, I guess I was just hot-headed, Pappy. I'm ready to forget it if you are. We're too good a team to break up by shooting each other."

Then Pappy smiled—that complete, face-splitting smile that he used so seldom. "Forgotten," he said.

After it was all over, I felt closer to Pappy than I had ever felt before. We sat for a good while, as darkness came on, smoking those corn shuck cigarettes of his, and not saying anything. But I guess we both had Buck Creyton in our minds. I had already decided that I would hunt Creyton down the next day and tell him just the way it happened; then if he was still set on killing somebody, he could try it on me. I couldn't guess what Pappy was thinking until he said:

"This is as good a time as any to push across the river. You get that red horse of yours, son, and we'll be moving as soon as it's a little darker."

I got the wrong idea at first. I thought Pappy was running because he was afraid of a shoot-out with Buck Creyton. But then I realized that he wouldn't admit it that way if he was. At least he would make up some kind of excuse for pulling out.

But he didn't say anything, and then I began to get it. He was moving out on my account. He was ready to cross the Territory without the protection of a trail herd because he knew that Buck Creyton would get the straight story on his brother before long. He was protecting me, not himself.

I didn't see the sense in it. It seemed like it was just putting off a fight that was bound to come sooner or later, and why not get it over with now? But I didn't want to argue. I didn't want another flare-up with Pappy like I'd just had. So I went after Red.

We crossed the river about a mile above the station, keeping well east of the main trail, and pushed into Indian Territory. We rode without saying anything much. I didn't know how Pappy felt about it, but I didn't like the idea of running away from a fight that was bound to come sometime anyway. I figured he must have his reasons, so I let him have his way.

By daybreak, Pappy said we were almost to the Washita, and it was as good a place as any to pitch camp. The next day we pushed on across the Canadian, into some low, rolling hills, and that was where I began to see Pappy's reason for running.

First, we picked a place to camp near a dry creek bed; then Pappy insisted on scouting the surrounding country before telling me what he had in mind. Fort Gibson was on our right, Pappy said, over on the Arkansas line, but he didn't think it was close enough to bother us. The Fort Sill Indian Reservation was on our left, on the other side of the cattle trail, but the soldiers there were busy with the Indians and wouldn't be looking for us. The thing we had to worry about now, he went on, was government marshals making raids out of the Arkansas country. But we would have to take our chances with them.

"I've told you before," Pappy said, "that you've got a lot to learn." He led the way down to the dry creek bed and pointed to a log about forty yards down from us. "Pull as fast as you can and see how many bullets you can put in it."

It sounded foolish to me. And dangerous. What if soldiers heard the shooting? But I looked at Pappy, and his face was set and dead serious. I shrugged. "All right, if you say so."

I jerked at my righthand gun, but before I could clear leather the morning came to life with one explosion crowding on top of another. Pappy had emptied his own pistols into the log before I had started to shoot.

Pappy looked at me mildly and began punching the empties out of his two .44's. I didn't even bother to draw my own guns. My insides turned over and got cold as I thought of what Pappy could have done to me the other night, if he had wanted to. I breathed deeply a few times before I tried to speak.

At last I said, "All right, Pappy. Where do I start to learn?"

He grinned faintly. "With the holsters first," he said. "If you don't get your pistols out of your holsters, it doesn't make a damn how good a shot you are." He made me unbuckle my cartridge belts and he examined the leather carefully. "See here?" he said, working one of the .44's gently in and out of the holster. "It binds near the top where it's looped on the belt."

We went up to where the blanket rolls were, and Pappy got some saddle soap out of his bags. "You don't develop a fast draw all at once," he said, rubbing the saddle soap into the leather with his hands. "You cut away a piece of a second here, a piece of a second there, until you've got rid of every bit of motion and friction that's not absolutely necessary. All men aren't made to draw alike. Some like a cross-arm draw, or a waistband draw. Or a shoulder holster under the arm is the best for some men. You've got to find out what comes easiest and then work on it until it's perfect."

He stood back for a moment, looking at me as if I was a horse that he had just bought and he wasn't sure yet what kind of a deal he'd got.

Finally he shook his head. "Your arms are too long for the cross-arm or border draw. That goes the same for the waistband. At the side is the best place, low on your thighs, where your hands cup near the butts when you stand natural. You can't work out any certain way to stand, you've got to be able to shoot from any position."

Then he handed the belts and holsters back to me and I buckled them on again like he'd showed me. He looked me over critically.

"Unload your pistols and try drawing."

I punched the live rounds out and shoved the guns back in my holsters. Then I grabbed for them and snapped a few times at a spot in front of me.

"Again," Pappy said.

I did it all over again, but Pappy wasn't satisfied. He went over to where his saddle rig was and cut a pair of narrow leather thongs from his own bridle reins. Then he made me stand still, with my legs apart, while he put the thongs through the bottom of my holsters and tied them down to my thighs. "Arms too long, that makes the holsters too low," he said briefly. "They'd flap when you walk if you don't tie them down. Now try it again."

I pulled two more times and snapped on empty chambers so Pappy could get the right perspective.

"I guess they'll do," he said reluctantly. "Now we'll get to the shooting. The drawing can come later."

The dozen boxes of cartridges that I'd got from old man Garner went that afternoon. And most of Pappy's extra ammunition went the next day.

"Hell no!" Pappy would shout when I tried to shoot from the hip. "Aim. That's the reason they put front and rear sights on a pistol, to aim with."

Then I would try it again, holding the pistol straight in front of me, like a girl, aiming and shooting at whatever target Pappy happened to pick. Once in a while Pappy would nod. Once in a great while he would grunt his approval.

"Now aim without drawing your gun," Pappy said finally. "Imagine that you've got your pistol out in front of you, aiming carefully over the sights!" He threw an empty cartridge box about thirty yards down the draw. "Aim at that," he said.

I stood with my arms at my sides, trying to imagine that I was aiming at the box.

"Now draw your pistol and fire. One time. Slow.

I drew and fired, surprised to see the box jump crazily as the bullet slammed into it.

"Now with the other hand," Pappy said.

I tried it again with the left hand and the box jumped again.

I turned around and Pappy was looking at me strangely. "That'll do for today," he said. He rubbed the ragged beard on his chin, glaring down the draw at the cartridge box. "You've still got a lot to learn," he said gruffly, "but I guess you'll do. It took me two years to learn to shoot like that."

I thought I had been doing something big when, as a kid, I had managed to put a bullet in a tossed-up tin can. But I knew that hadn't been shooting. Not shooting as an exact, science, the way Pappy had worked it out.

The next day we worked on my draw, starting with empty pistols, drawing in carefully studied movements. It was agonizingly slow at first. Arms, and hands, and position of the body, had to be correct to the hundredth of an inch. Only after everything was as perfect as it could possibly be did Pappy let me try for speed.

I watched Pappy do it slowly and it seemed so easy. His hands cupping around the butts, starting the upward pull. Thumbs bringing the hammers back as the pistols began to slide out of the holsters, forefingers slipping into the trigger guard. Then firing both pistols, not at the same time, as it seemed, but working in rhythm, taking the kick on one side and then on the other.

"All right, try it," Pappy said.

He pitched out another cartridge box, and I drew slowly, carefully, for the first few times to get the feel of it. Then, as I holstered the pistols again, Pappy shouted:

"Hit it!"

I wheeled instinctively, catching a glimpse of the small cardboard box that Pappy had tossed in the air. The pistols seemed to jump in my hands. The right one roared. Then the left one crowded on top of it. The cartridge box jerked crazily in the air, then fluttered in pieces to the ground.

I stood panting as the last piece of ragged cardboard hit the earth. I could feel myself grinning. I thought, Ray Novak and his two bullets in a tin can! I wondered what Ray Novak would say to shooting like this. I was pleased with myself, and I expected Pappy to be pleased with the job of teaching he had done. But when I turned, he was frowning.

"Take that silly grin off your face," he said roughly. "Sure you can shoot, but there's nothing so damned wonderful about that. I could teach the dumbest state policeman in Texas to shoot the same way, if I had the time. You just learn faster than others, that's all."

I didn't know what was wrong with him. He had worked from sunup to sundown for two days teaching me to shoot, and now that I had finally caught the knack of it, it made him mad.

Then his face softened a little and he looked at me soberly. "Now don't get your back up, son. I'm just trying to tell you that knowing how to shoot and draw isn't enough. Boothills are full of men who could outdraw and outshoot both of us. Shooting a man who's as good as you are, and shooting a pasteboard box, are two different things. Look. . . ."

He drew his pistols and held them out to me butts first.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Is this the way you'd disarm a man? Make him hand over his pistols butts first?"

"Sure," I said.

"Then take them."

I reached for them. The pistols whirled almost too fast to see, with no warning, no twist of the hand. With his fingers in the trigger guards, Pappy had flipped the pistols over, forward, cocking the hammers as they went around. In a split second—as long as it takes a man to die—he had whirled the .44's all the way around, cocked them, and snapped, with both muzzles against my chest.

The pistols were empty. Pappy had seen to that beforehand. If they had been loaded I would have died without ever knowing how. My mouth had suddenly gone dry. I swallowed to get my stomach out of my throat.

Pappy holstered one pistol and casually began to load the other. "I said it once before," he said. "When it comes to guns, a man is never good enough. Now get your blanket roll together. We've stayed in one place too long already."

That night it rained, but we moved anyway, because Pappy said we had already used more luck than Indian Territory allowed. That night it caught up with us.

First, we almost rode into a detail of cavalry and, later, a hunting party of Cheyennes that had strayed off the reservation. We pulled up in a thicket of scrub oak and waited for the Indians to pass. I looked at Pappy and his face was just a blur in the rain and darkness, and I swore at myself for not bringing a slicker when I left John's City.

Pappy said, "I don't like it. With Indians off the reservation, there's bound to be cavalry all over this part of the Territory. Two stray riders wouldn't have much of a chance getting to Kansas."

I said, "The cattle trail can't be far from here. We can move in that direction, and if the cavalry sees us we can tell them we're droyers, looking for strays."

Pappy gave a sudden shrug. He didn't think much of the idea, but, with cavalry and Indians on the other side of us, there wasn't anything else to do. Pappy didn't mention Buck Creyton, and neither did I. After the Indians had passed on in the darkness, behind a slanting gray sheet of rain, we began moving to the west.

I think I smelled coffee even before I heard the nervous bawling of the cattle. Steaming, soothing coffee to warm a man's insides, and Pappy and I both needed it. We pulled up on a rise and looked down at the flatland below that some outfit was using for bedground. A herd of what seemed to be a thousand or more cattle was milling restlessly, and above the beat of the rain we could hear the nightwatch crooning profanely.

But the thing that caught our attention was the coffee. We could see a fire going under a slant of canvas that we took to be the chuck wagon, and that was where the smell was coming from.

Pappy looked at me. "You ever see that outfit before?"

"I don't know. I can't see enough of it to tell."

We were both thinking how good a hot cup of coffee would taste. We sat for a moment with rain in our face, rain plastering our clothing, rain running off our hats and slithering down our backs and filling our boots. Without a word, we started riding toward the fire.

As we circled the herd I heard one of the night herders croon, "Get on it there, you no account sonofabitch," to the tune of *The Girl I Left Behind Me*. There were three or four men standing under the canvas where the coffee smell was coming from. Pappy and I left our horses beside the chuck wagon and ducked in under the canvas sheet.

"Can you spare a couple of cups of that?" Pappy said to the cook, nodding at the big tin coffee pot.

The cook, a grizzled old man half asleep, grunted and got two tin cups and poured. The other men looked at us curiously, probably wondering where the hell we came from and where we left our slickers. I took a swallow of the scalding coffee, and another man ducked in under the canvas, cursing and shaking water from his oilskin rain hat. He looked at me and said:

"Well, I'll be damned."

For a minute, I stopped breathing. The man was Bat Steuber, the remuda man who had given me the grain for the horses. We had run onto the same outfit that Buck Creyton was working for.

Bat Steuber looked at us for a long minute, but I couldn't tell what he was thinking. Finally he turned to the other men and said, "The boss says, every man in the saddle that's supposed to be on night watch."

"There I was, a poor helpless girl with only my bare hands for defense. So I strangled him."

CHAPTER EIGHT

Cursing, the men left one at a time, got on their horses, and rode toward the herd again. Bat got his coffee and came over to the edge of the canvas where Pappy and I had moved.

"Is this Pappy Garret?" he said to me.

"That's right."

For a moment, he looked at Pappy with a mixture of awe and admiration. "I'm glad to know you, Pappy. I've heard about you." Then he laughed abruptly. "As who hasn't."

Pappy nodded, looking at me. Steuber's voice went down almost to a whisper as he turned to me again. "Kid, it looks like I got you in a mess of trouble without meaning to. He's after you now instead of Pappy. Me and my damned big mouth."

"Who's after me?" I said.

"Buck Creyton." Steuber wiped his face nervously. "Hell, kid, I wasn't trying to get you into trouble. I was just trying to get Buck cooled down. He wasn't worth a damn on the herd as long as that temper of his was boiling. Anyway, after you left that day Buck was hell-bent on a shoot-out with Pappy here. And I said, 'Hell, Buck, what makes you think Pappy Garret killed your brother? It don't stand to reason. He wouldn't have no call to shoot Paul for nothing—and you know damn good and well that your brother wasn't going to pick a fight with a man like Pappy.' "

Steuber wiped his face again. "That was all I said," he went on. "I remember Buck didn't say a word for a long time, and I could see him thinking about it, way at the back of those eyes of his. And finally he said, 'That damned punk kid.' "

I felt my insides freeze as I remembered those kill-crazy eyes of Buck Creyton's. Pappy didn't say anything. He didn't move.

I said, "Where's Creyton now?"

"Out with the herd somewhere." Steuber made a helpless gesture. "Hell, kid, I'm sorry. . . ."

"Forget it," I said. "If you see him, tell him the punk kid is down at the chuck wagon. Tell him if he wants to shoot off his mouth to do it to my face."

I could feel Pappy stiffen. Bat Steuber's eyes flew wide and he searched around for something to say, but the words wouldn't come. After a minute he made that same helpless gesture again. "All right, kid, if that's the way you want it." He ducked out into the rain.

Pappy said flatly, "Now that was a damnfool thing to do."

I said, "Maybe. But a showdown has got to come sometime, and it might as well be now. I should have told him that first day when he was gunning for you, but I guess I lost my guts for a minute."

"You're not ready for a man like Creyton," Pappy said. "Now get that red horse of yours and we'll ride toward Kansas."

"And get taken by the cavalry?"

I looked at Pappy and his eyes were sober and sad. I said, "It's no good like this Pappy. I appreciate what you've done for me, but you can't fight my fights for me. Remember what you said: 'A man does his own killing, and that's enough?' Well, this is between me and Buck Creyton. I don't want to go along for a month, or six months, or a year, looking over my shoulder every time I hear a sound and expecting Buck Creyton to be there. And sooner or later he *would* be there, and maybe by that time I'd have lost my guts again."

For a long moment Pappy didn't move, didn't say anything. Then, at last, he got out a soggy sack of tobacco and his corn shuck papers and began rolling a cigarette. After he finished, he handed the makings to me.

"If that's the way it has to be," he said, "then I can't help you. It'll be between just you and Buck."

We stood there watching the rain, listening to the crooning of the night watch, and the nervous bawling of the cattle. After a while, I got a rag from the cook, wiped my guns dry, and put in fresh cartridges. After that there was nothing to do but wait.

Pappy didn't try to change my mind again. I guess he knew what it was like to be hunted, not only by the law, but by other killers like himself. And he knew it was better to get it over with now before the slow rot of time ate your guts away.

There was no way of knowing how long it would take the word to get to Creyton, but it would get to him. All I had to do was stand here, and before long he would be coming after me. I couldn't tell if I was scared or not. I wasn't very curious about it. There was an emptiness in my belly, and a dull ache . . . and maybe I was scared, after all. But not so much of Buck Creyton. My mind kept going back to better days and better lands, and, no matter how I fought it, I couldn't keep my thoughts away from Laurin.

That was what I was afraid of, not of getting killed, but of leaving Laurin.

In the darkness, we heard the hurried sucking sound of soggy boots coming toward the chuck wagon. I turned quickly. Beside me, Pappy jerked out of the weary slouch that he had fallen into.

"Watch it son," he said quietly. "Don't frame yourself against the firelight."

The boots came on. A blurred figure began to take shape in the rain, walking quickly and making sloshing sounds in the gummy mud. But it wasn't Buck Creyton. It was a man I had never seen before, in dripping, rattling, oilskins. He ducked under the shelter and stood glaring angrily at us.

"Get the hell out of here," he said abruptly. "I don't know who you are, but you're not goin' to start a shootin' scrape and stampede a thousand head of steers. Not if I can help it."

Pappy said softly, "Now wait a minute. We're not starting anything. We just dropped in for a hot cup of coffee."

The man spat. "Like hell," he said. "You ride up and in ten minutes the whole camp's in an uproar." He looked at Pappy. "You ever hear of Buck Creyton?"

"I heard of him," Pappy said.

"He's comin' after you," the man said, grinning suddenly. He looked as if he expected Pappy to turn pale and start running at the mention of Buck Creyton. When Pappy didn't move, his eyes were suddenly angry again.

Pappy began rolling another cigarette. "It's not me he's after," he said. Then he nodded at me. "It's him."

The man stared. He was a short, round, hard little Irishman, with a baby-pink face and a blue-red nose. The herd's trail boss, I guessed. He didn't believe that an eighteen-year-old kid would stand still when he knew that a man like Creyton was gunning for him. He wheeled back on Pappy, about to call him a liar, when there was the sound of boots again, coming out of the darkness.

The firelight, son," Pappy said softly. "Don't frame yourself."

I moved away, to the edge of the canvas shelter.

"Further," Pappy said.

I moved out into the rain. The rain hit my face like slender silver spikes driving out of a black nothingness. I felt empty and all alone out there, away from the fire's warmth, the canvas's shelter, Pappy's friendliness. There was just me and the night and the rain, and the sound of boots coming toward me. I thought: This is the way it had to be, Laurin. You understand that, don't you?

There was little comfort in the night's answer. The boots were getting closer. From the corner of my eye I could see Pappy standing there under the shelter, looking into the darkness. And the pink-faced little trail boss, with his mouth working angrily, but no sound coming out. The sound of the boots stopped. A voice came out of the night.

"Pappy, I want to see that killing little bastard you ride with."

I thought I could see Pappy smile. A sad, forlorn smile. "I reckon you'll see him, Buck, if you just keep walking."

"Where is he? Hid out to shoot me in the back, the way he did Paul?"

I heard myself saying, "I'm not hid out. I'm here in the rain, just like you are. And I didn't shoot your brother in the back. But I shot him."

I heard his swearing. "You won't shoot anybody else, punk. Not after tonight."

He started walking forward again, slowly now, carefully. I suppose I should have stayed where I was, stood still, with my pistols out. That way I could have followed the sound, and that would have cut down Creyton's advantages. But suddenly I didn't want any advantage. Pappy never asked for one. All he ever asked for was an even break, and I could get that here in the darkness. I started walking toward the sound.

I heard Pappy give a grunt of dismay. The trail boss said hoarsely, "My God, stop it! This is crazy!"

But we didn't stop. It couldn't be stopped now. With every step we got closer together and I expected to see him. My eyes began to jump from peering so hard into the darkness. I didn't dare close them for an instant, even to blink away the water that was caught on my lashes. An instant was all it took with a man like Buck Creyton.

Pappy, and the trail boss, and the flickering firelight seemed to fade off into the distance and disappear completely. There was just me and a sound out there in the night. I wondered if Creyton had drawn yet. I wondered if that sighting-before-shooting technique of Pappy's worked in the rain. Would anything work in the rain? This was a hell of a place for a gunfight, in the rain and darkness where you couldn't see anything. I thought: If you don't stop thinking about it, Buck Creyton's going to spill your guts in the mud. And then I saw him looming out of the darkness.

He looked as big as a mountain. He had his slicker pulled back behind the butts of his pistols and water was pouring in a sheer veil off the brim of his hat. His face shone faintly over the shapeless bulk of his body, as cold and distant as the moon. I imagined that I could see those icy eyes of his. But that was only imagination. Everything happened too fast, and it was too dark, to make out details like that.

His hands were just a blur going after his pistols, and I thought: He's fast. He's fast all right. Pappy himself, on the best day he ever saw, was never any faster than that. Then everything in my mind became crystal clear and painfully sharp. It was that instant in a lifetime that a few people experience once, and most not at all—that instant of walking the razor-sharp edge of time and space, knowing that if you fall there is nothing but disaster all around you. Even my hearing was tuned sharper than the best bred hunting dog's. I imagined that I could hear every rain drop hit. I could hear the double clicks as the hammers of Creyton's pistols were jerked back. And I thought: So this is the way it is. It's almost worth getting killed just to be a part of the excitement of dying. And then the night exploded into sound and fire.

I was vaguely aware of the pistols in my hands, and the roaring in my ears drowning all other sound. It was almost like being drunk, but no man had ever been drunk the way I was for that instant. Not on anything that came out of a bottle. For that moment I wasn't afraid of Buck Creyton, nor of any man on earth. I just held my guns and they did the rest, one crash crowding another until the night was crazy with sound. And after a time there were hollow, empty clicks as hammers fell on empty chambers, and I looked up ahead and there was only a shapeless hulk on the ground where Buck Creyton had been standing. I stood there gasping for breath, as if I had been running hard until my lungs couldn't take it any longer. And over the monotonous beat of the rain, I could hear the trail boss saying, "My God! My God!" Over and over, as if he had to say something and those were the only two words he knew.

From far away, it seemed, I heard the sound of alarm and the crazy bawling and the pound of hoofs. And a voice in the darkness shouted, "Stampede!" and the running boots headed for the chuck wagon suddenly stopped, wheeled, and ran toward the remuda pen for the horses. Over it all, the trail boss was bellowing wildly, but it all seemed far away and no concern of mine.

Pappy came out from under the shelter, looking at me strangely. Then he went over to what was left of Buck Creyton.

"Dammit, son," Pappy said, "did you have to shoot him all to pieces?"

"I couldn't stop," I said. "I started shooting and something got ahold of me, and I couldn't stop."

Pappy looked at me again in that strange way. I couldn't tell what was behind those gray expressionless eyes of his. I couldn't tell if he was glad or sorry that it had worked out the way it had. For a moment, as he looked at me, I thought there was fear in those eyes. But I must have been mistaken about that.

"Do you feel like riding?" Pappy said at last.

"Sure," I said. "But why should we ride anywhere?"

He jerked his head toward the bedground where all the noise and commotion was going on. All hell was breaking loose, but I was just beginning to become conscious of it. It was almost like returning suddenly from a long visit in a strange place, and it took a while to get used to things as you used to know them. The cattle had broken toward the north, running blind and wild with fear. The riders, some of them just in the underwear they had been sleeping in, were riding hard on the flanks, trying to turn them.

"After starting this ruckus," Pappy said, "the least we can do is help them turn the herd."

Pappy started in an awkward half-lope toward his horse beside the chuck wagon. In a moment I came out of it. I ran toward Red, and on the way I passed the bloody, shapeless form that had been Buck Creyton a few minutes before. He lay twisted, in the mud, looking straight up, with the rain in his face. There were bright, shimmering puddles forming all around him.

I hit the saddle hard, and Red switched his head in angry protest. He didn't want to move. He had lulled himself into a kind of stupor there in the rain, and he just wanted to be let alone. I drove the iron to him and he reared sharply. Finally I pulled him around and he fell into a quick, ground-eating run to the north.

We caught Pappy on the herd's flank just as the break began to settle down to a real stampede. There wasn't time to be scared, the way they say you always are after a fight. There was just the blind race along the flanks of the herd, and once in a while I could feel Red slide and fight for his footing again in the mud, and I tried not to think what would happen if he put a hoof down on a

loose rock or into a prairie dog hole. Red and Pappy's big black spurted ahead of most of the other riders. Up ahead, I could hear the trail boss yelling and cursing.

He was trying to turn them by himself as Pappy and I came up alongside him. He drove his rugged little paint into the van of the stampede. Leaning far over his pony he shoved the muzzle of his pistol behind the shoulders of the lead steer and fired.

The big animal thundered down, rolling and churning the mud, slowing the herd's rush. Without looking back to see who we were, he roared, "Turn 'em damnit!"

I thought I could make out that faint grin of Pappy's as he drove his big black into the point of the herd. I shoved Red in after him, and the trail boss came in on our heels. The startled cattle began to slow down their crazy rush for nowhere. The point began to give, began to edge to the left as Pappy and the trail boss pushed in, yelling and firing their pistols over the animals' heads.

There wasn't much to it after the point began to give. We cut them over and headed them back until we had two columns of cattle going in opposite directions; then the riders came up and milled them in a wide circle.

After the riders got the mill going, there was nothing for me and Pappy to do. We pulled up the slope a way to let our horses blow after the hard run. I noticed then, for the first time, that it had stopped raining.

"One steer lost," I said. "It could have been worse."

Pappy looked at me. "One steer and one rider," he said drily. He nodded toward the bottom of the slope to where a rider was coming toward us. It was the trail boss.

Surprisingly, he didn't seem mad this time. He just looked relieved to get his herd under control with the loss of only one steer. He pulled up in front of us, mopping his face with a rain-soaked bandanna.

"By God," he said wearily, "I ought to turn the two of you over to the bluebellies."

Pappy straightened in the saddle. "What makes you think the bluebellies want us?"

The little Irishman laughed roughly. "You're Pappy Garret, the boys tell me. And this kid's name's Cameron, ain't it?" Without waiting for an answer, he took a folded, soggy square of paper from his hip pocket. It was too dark to read, but a sinking feeling in my stomach told me what it was.

"Reward," the trail boss said pleasantly. "For killin' off some bluebelly cavalry down in the Texas panhandle. Ten thousand for Garret, five for the kid. Here, read it for yourself."

Pappy made no move to take the paper. "Are you aiming to make a try for that reward money?" he asked softly.

The trail boss laughed abruptly. "Hell, no." Then his voice got serious. "It's no concern of mine if the army wants to take you in. I'm short of hands and good horses. From the way you two jumped in and turned that herd, it looks my problem is taken care of. That is, if you want a job."

Pappy looked at me. He was thinking the same thing I was. "I kind of figured," he said, "that you'd be sore because the boy killed off one of your riders."

The trail boss snorted. "It was small loss. Creyton was trouble from the first day I signed him on. He thought he was Godamighty with them two pistols of his . . . and I guess he had everybody else thinking it until tonight." He looked at me with much the same expression that I had seen in Pappy's eyes. "I'll tell you the truth," he said. "I never expected you to beat Buck Creyton, son. I was expecting we'd be burying a kid of a boy in the morning." He shrugged. "But I guess you never know."

He pulled his paint around and studied the herd for a minute. "Think it over," he said. "If you want to sign up, I'll see you at the chuck wagon for breakfast."

He rode down the slope again and into the darkness. I looked at Pappy and he was shaking his head slowly from side to side. "I guess it's like the man says," he said soberly. "You never know."

It was too good a thing to pass up. With fifteen thousand dollars on our heads, every soldier in the Territory was a potential bounty hunter. The next morning we were at the chuck wagon and Bass Hagan, the hard pink-faced little trail boss, signed us on. Somebody must have buried Buck Creyton, but there was no mention of it at breakfast. There was no talk of any kind, for that matter. The riders regarded Pappy with a kind of dumb awe, and me . . . I couldn't be sure just what they were thinking about me. I could feel their eyes on me when they didn't think I was looking. Curious eyes, mixed with a kind of fear, I thought. They ate their breakfast quickly and silently as a cold sun began to come up in the east. Then, with elaborate casualness, they sauntered down to the remuda pen to get their horses.

It took a while to get used to that kind of treatment, but I finally did, as one long, weary, dust-filled day dragged into another. The men let me and Pappy strictly alone. And I began to appreciate how Pappy had lived all these years with that reputation of his. It was like being by yourself on the moon. You couldn't have been more alone. In every man you looked at, you saw that same mixture of curiosity and fear—like men partially hypnotized by a caged and especially deadly breed of snake. They couldn't take their eyes off it. But they knew better than to get into the cage with it.

That was the way it was after getting a reputation by killing a man like Buck Creyton.

Bass Hagan, the trail boss, was the only man who didn't seem to be afraid of us, but he spent most of his time up in the van, and Pappy and I ate dust back in the drag. And it wasn't long before I learned to hate the nights, when time came for sleeping. I learned to sleep the way Pappy did, always keeping a corner of my mind open, never letting myself slip into complete unconsciousness. I learned to sleep—if you could call it sleeping—on my back, with a cocked pistol in my hand. I kept thinking of that reward money. I wondered how long it would be before somebody tried to collect.

I learned a lot of things in those days as we pushed from the Canadian up to North Cottonwood in Kansas. Pappy was my teacher. A little at a time, every day, he showed me the little tricks that men like us had to know to stay alive. The first rule, the most important rule of all, was to trust no one. Accept it as truth that every man you met was scheming to kill you, that every footstep behind you was a man ready to shoot you in the back. Never get caught off guard. Never relax. Never take more than two or three drinks, and let women alone. Never let anyone do you a favor without paying for it, never be obligated to anybody.

And that was only the beginning. He coached me on how to enter a door, any door. First you listened; if it sounded all right, then you stepped inside fast, with a quick step to the side so as to get your back against a wall and not frame yourself against the light. There was a certain toe-heel way to walk when you didn't want to be heard, and a way to block your spur rowels to keep them from jangling. Little things, all of them. Things that ordinary men would pay no attention to, but with Pappy they were matters of life and death.

I learned to value my pistols above all other possessions, and to take care of them before seeing to anything else. My horse came next, almost as important as the pistols. I learned that my own comfort was almost of no importance at all. A thousand things came ahead of that, if I wanted to keep living.

What Pappy had to teach me, I learned fast, the way I learned to shoot. Already, among the trail hands, there was talk of Davis being removed from the governor's chair in Austin, and that meant that military rule and the Davis police would go with him. It was important that I learn everything that Pappy could teach me, because I had to stay alive, to go back to Texas.

North Cottonwood was the settling-up place for the cattlemen before going the last thirty-five miles to Abilene. It was there that the riders were paid off and discharged, unless they happened to belong to the drover's own outfit, and then they went on to the railhead with the herd. It was there that all the scrawny and sickly cattle were cut out of the herd and left to fatten before going to market. It was a crazy patchwork of wagons, and dust, and bawling cattle, and cow camps. Punchers who hadn't had a drop to drink and hadn't seen a woman for more two months, began peeling off their filthy trail clothing, bathing, shaving, and putting on their one clean pair of serge pants that they had brought in their saddle bags all the way from the Rio Grande, maybe.

I could see Pappy's eyes take on new life after we finally got the herd rounded up on a bedground that suited Bass Hagan.

"This is the place, son," he said. "You haven't seen a town until you've seen Abilene."

He even found a clean pair of pants and a shirt with all the buttons on it, and put them on to celebrate the occasion. But Pappy got a jolt that afternoon as the riders were being paid off. Bass Hagan called us over to one of the supply wagons where they had set up headquarters.

"Now, what the hell?" Pappy said.

I said, "Maybe we're so good he wants to hire us for another trail drive."

Pappy grunted. Trail driving was work, and he had had enough of that to last him for a while. What money Pappy needed, he could usually get over a poker table.

But we went over anyway. Hagan was slicked and duded up in a fancy outfit that he had been saving for the end of the trail. He was just cinching up a big bay, the best horse in the remuda, when Pappy and I got there.

I want you boys to stay with the herd," Hagan said without looking around. "It'll mean extra pay for a couple of days. I've got to ride into town on business."

Pappy said, "We don't need the extra pay. We just signed up as far as North Cottonwood."

The trail boss turned slowly, frowning. "I figured I done you boys a favor by hiring you on and getting you through Indian Territory. But if you figure it's too damn much to ask, staying over a couple of days . . ."

Pappy glanced at me. Sure, Hagan had done us a favor, but we had earned our money on that trail drive. I could see Pappy's face grow longer. "Never let anyone do you a favor without paying for it," he had said. "Never become obligated to anyone."

Pappy shrugged. "All right, Bass. I guess we can stay here a couple of days. What do you want us to do?"

Hagan brightened. "Nothing special, just help my other riders take care of the herd till I get back." He swung up on the bay, grinning quietly. As we watched him put his spurs to the bay and lope off to the north, an idea got stuck in my mind and I couldn't get it out.

I said, "Something just occurred to me. Do you think Hagan would think enough of fifteen thousand dollars to try to get us arrested?"

Pappy took a long time rolling one of his corn shuck cigarettes. He held a match to it thoughtfully, handing the makings to me. At last he smiled that sad half smile that I had come to expect. "I think I've said it before, son," he said. "You learn fast."

But we stayed on with the herd, and, if Pappy was worried, it didn't show on that long face of his. We didn't mention Hagan again that day, but when night came we fell automatically into a routine that we had worked out, of one sleeping and one watching.

Once Pappy said, "Money is a funny thing. The root of all evil, they say. Men steal for it, kill for it, lie for it . . ." He inhaled deeply on a cigarette. "Money," he said again. "I never had much of it myself. I could have hooked up with the Bassett gang once when they was robbing the Confederate pay rolls. If I'd done it, maybe I'd have been a rich man now."

He laughed abruptly, without humor. "My ma always taught me that it was a sin to steal. I never stole a dime in my life. . . ."

Pappy's voice trailed off. He didn't know how to say it, but I thought I knew what was going on in his mind. I had thought about it too, since I saw that reward poster with my name on it. Most men got something out of their crimes—maybe not much, when they stood on the gallows thinking about it, waiting for the floor to drop out from under them, but something. Men like me and Pappy, we didn't get anything. All the money we had was the thirty-odd dollars that Hagan had paid us for the trail job. All the satisfaction we had was that of knowing that we were faster with guns than most men, and that wasn't much of a satisfaction when you thought of what other men had. Security, homes, wives. Things that Pappy could never have. And—I had to face it now—things that I would never have if I didn't somehow fight my way out of the crazy whirl of killing that seemed to have no beginning and no end.

The thought of that scared me. It made me sick all the way down to the bottom of my stomach when I thought of ending up the way Pappy was bound to end. Without Laurin. Without anything. Until now, I had been telling myself that there really wasn't anything to worry about, all I had to do was hold out until I could get a free trial in Texas. But now I wasn't sure. Paul Creyton, the policemen, the cavalrymen, Buck Creyton—after each one I had told myself that there wouldn't be any more killing. I could still say it, but I couldn't believe the words any more.

"I never stole a dime in my life," Pappy said again, as if just thinking about that particular clean part of his life made him feel better.

I found myself hoping desperately that Bass Hagan would let well enough alone and just tend to his cattle business in Abilene. I thought bitterly: If they would just let us alone . . . If Paul Creyton hadn't tried to steal my horse, if the bluebelly hadn't killed Pa. . . .

But it was too late for tears. We couldn't change the past—nor the future either, for that matter. If Hagan had it in his head to try for the reward money, nothing would stop him. If it wasn't now, it would be later.

The next morning was hot and hazy with dust from ten thousand stamping cattle scattering as far as you could see in any direction.

There wasn't anything for Pappy and me to do. Hagan's regular riders were taking care of the herd and remuda, and guarding the wagons. I thought: It seems crazy as hell for Hagan to pay good money for riders he doesn't need. Unless, of course, he was figuring to get his money back, and some more with it. I watched Pappy plundering around in one of the supply wagons, and after a while he climbed down with a towel over his shoulder and a bar of soap in his hand.

"I figure we might as well wash up," he said with a thin grin, "as long as there doesn't seem to be any work for us to do."

I said, "Don't you think one of us better keep watch?" We still hadn't mentioned Hagan, but he was never far out of our minds.

CHAPTER NINE

Pappy shrugged. "We can watch from the creek. Maybe we've just got a case of the jumps. Anyway, we need a bath. We can't ride into Abilene looking like a pair of saddle tramps."

Pappy was the careful one; if he thought it was all right, then it was all right. We went down to the remuda herd and cut out Red and Pappy's big black and got them saddled. The creek was only about a hundred yards back of our wagons, but a horseman never walks anywhere if he can ride.

We left the horses down by the water, and I took my place under a rattling cottonwood while Pappy bathed first. Nothing happened that I could see. I had a clear view of the herd and wagons, and everything was going on as usual. Behind me, I could hear Pappy splashing around and grunting at the shock of cold water. After a while he climbed up the bank where I was, wearing his new serge pants and clean shirt. But he didn't look much different, with that scraggly crop of whiskers still on his face.

"No sign of Hagan yet?" he asked.

I shook my head.

"Go on and take your bath," he said, handing me the wet bar of yellow lye soap. "I'll let you know if we've got company."

I peeled off my clothes and waded out knee deep in the bitter cold water. I didn't have a change of clothes. That was something else I forgot to bring from John's City, along with a slicker. Well, I had over thirty dollars in my pocket. That would buy me some clothes in Abilene—providing nobody got too set on keeping us out of Abilene.

In the meantime, I washed the clothes I had, lathering them with the lye soap, then weighting them down to the bottom of the stream with a rock while I washed myself. I was grimy from top to bottom, not just my hands and feet and face, like it used to be on Saturday nights when Ma put the big wooden wash tub in the kitchen and filled it for me and Pa. I scrubbed hard, using sand on my elbows and knees when the soap wouldn't do the job. I didn't feel naked until I got all the dirt off. After I had finished, I felt like I must have polluted the stream for ten miles down.

After I had sloshed my clothes around to get the soap out, wrung them out and hung them on a bush to dry, I went downstream to take care of Red. He wasn't as dirty as I had been, but I rinsed off some caked mud on his legs and rubbed him down and he looked better.

"You about finished down there, son?" Pappy called.

"Sure," I said. "I was just sprucing Red up a little."

"You better get your clothes on," Pappy said with a mildness that still deceived me sometimes. "It looks like we're going to have company, after all."

I stiffened in the cold water. Then I splashed over to the edge and went over to the bush where my clothes were. They weren't dry, but they weren't as wet as they had been the night of the rain—the night I had killed Buck Creyton. I put them on the way they were, stuffed my feet in my boots, and buckled on the .44's.

As I clawed my way up the bank, Pappy said, "Keep down, son. We don't want to tell them anything they don't already know."

I raised my head carefully over the edge of the bank, the way Pappy was doing. Sure enough, it was Hagan and four other men that I'd never seen before. All of them were heeled up with guns. Hagan was the only one not carrying a rifle in his saddle boot.

"Who are they?" I said.

"Jim Langly's men."

I shot Pappy a glance. Langly was the marshal of Abilene.

I said, "I thought the marshal was a friend of yours."

Pappy smiled that smile of his, but this time it seemed sadder than usual. "That was a mistake I made," he said quietly. "You never know who your friends are until you get a price on your head."

"What are you going to do?"

"I don't know," Pappy said slowly. "I haven't decided yet."

We lay there for a long moment watching Hagan call one of the herders over. The man pointed toward the creek, evidently in answer to a question. The man went away, and Hagan called the four Langly men together and talked for a minute. Then the men fanned out, taking up positions inside the covered supply wagons.

"Well, that's about as clear as a man would want it," Pappy said.

I felt myself tightening up. The rattle of the cottonwood seemed louder than it had a few minutes before. Smells were sharper. Even my eyes were keener.

"That bastard," I said. "That lousy bastard."

"Hagan?"

"Who else?"

Pappy seemed to think it over carefully. "I guess we really can't blame Hagan much," he said. "Fifteen thousand is a lot of money for a few minutes' work—especially if you don't have any idea how dangerous work like that can be." He paused for a minute. "But Jim Langly . . . We've been good friends for years. This is a hell of a thing for Jim to do."

He still didn't sound mad, but more hurt than anything.

"What are you going to do?" I asked again.

After a long wait, Pappy said, "I think maybe we'll ride up the creek a way, and then make for Abilene and talk to Jim."

"You're not going to let Hagan get away with this, are you?" I was suddenly hot inside. I had forgotten that last night I had promised myself no more trouble.

"We can't buck four saddle guns," Pappy said.

I knew he was right, but my hands ached to get at Hagan's throat. I wanted to see that pink face of his turn red, and then blue, and then purple. But I choked the feeling down and the effort left me empty. It always has to be somebody, I thought. Now it's Hagan, and Langly. Why can't they just let us alone?

Slowly, Pappy began sliding down the bank. His eyes looked tired and very old.

We went upstream as quietly as we could, scattering drinking cattle and horses, and once in a while coming upon a naked man lathering himself with soap. We rode for maybe a mile in the creek bed, until we were pretty sure that nobody in the Hagan camp could see us; then we pulled out in open country and headed north.

Pappy rode stiffly in the saddle, not looking one way or the other. After a while the hurt look went out of his eyes, and a kind of

smoky anger banked up like sullen thunderheads.

We left North Cottonwood behind; and I wondered vaguely how long it would be before Hagan and his lawdogs would get tired of waiting in those covered wagons and send somebody down to the creek to see what had happened to us. Maybe they already had.

I tried to keep my mind blank. I tried to push Hagan and Langly out of my brain, but they hung on and ate away at me like a rotting disease. As we rode, the morning got to be afternoon and a dazzling Kansas sun moved over to the west and beat at us like a blowtorch. Gradually the monotony of silent march lulled me into a stupor, and I found myself counting every thud as Red put a hoof down, and cussing Bass Hagan with every breath.

Actually, it wasn't Hagan in particular that I was cursing, but mankind in general. The thousands of greedy, money-loving bastards like Hagan who were never satisfied to take care of their own business and let it go at that. They were like a flock of vultures feeding on other people's misery. They were like miserable coyotes sniffing around a sick cow, waiting until the animal was too weak to fight back and then pouncing and killing. I had enough hate for all the Hagans. The thousands of them. All the bastards who wouldn't let us alone, who insisted on getting themselves killed. And every time they insisted, it put a bigger price on our heads.

I remember looking over at Pappy once and wondering if he had ever thought of it that way. Pappy, who had never stolen a dime in his life, who had never wanted to hurt anybody except when it was a matter of life or death for himself—I wondered if he felt trapped the way I did, if he could feel the net drawing a little tighter every time some damned fool forced him to kill. If Pappy ever felt that way, he had never talked about it. He wasn't much of a man with words. And then it occurred to me that maybe that was the reason he was the kind of man he was. Being unable to depend on words, maybe he had been forced to let his guns do the talking.

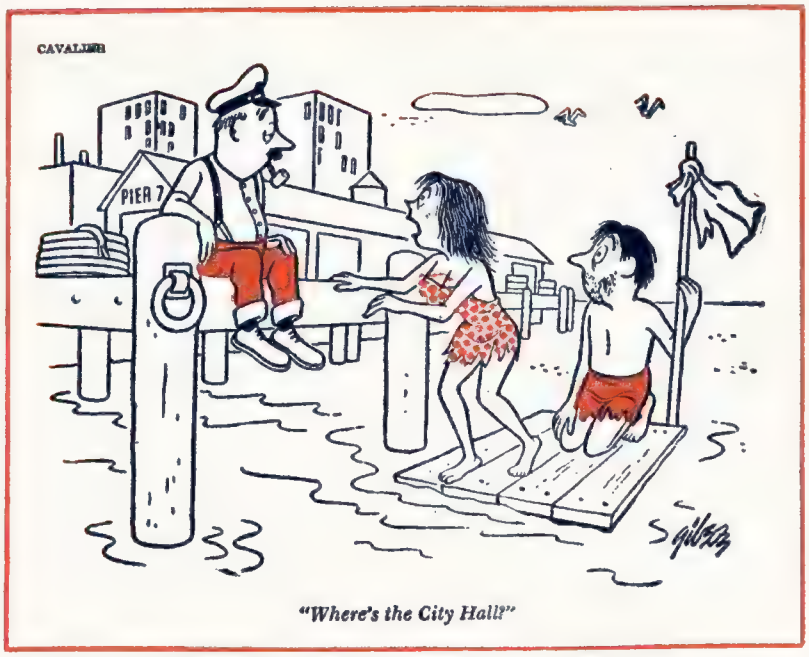
Then, out of nowhere, Laurin came into my brain and cooled the heat of anger and helpless frustration, the way it happened so many times. When everything seemed lost, then Laurin would enter into my thoughts and everything was all right again. I'll be coming back, I promised. And I could almost see that hopeful, wide-eyed smile of hers. They can't keep me away from you, I said silently. You're the only important thing in my life. The only real thing. Everything's going to be all right. You'll see.

I looked up suddenly and Pappy was giving me that curious look. I felt my face warm. I had been speaking my thoughts out loud.

"Well?" I said.

"Nothing, son," Pappy said soberly. "Not a thing."

It was late in the afternoon when we finally sighted Abilene. The noise, the bawling of cattle, the shrill screams of locomotive whistles around the cattle pens, the fitful cloud of dust that surged over the place like a restless shroud, gave you an idea of what the town was like long before you got close enough to be part of it. Over to the west we could see new herds coming up from North Cottonwood, heading for the dozens of giant cattle pens on the edge of town. Pappy and I circled the cattle pens, and the combined noise of prodded steers and locomotives and hoarsely-shouting punchers was like something out of another world. It was worse than a trail drive. It was like nothing I had ever seen before. I had never seen a train before, and I kept looking back long after we had passed the pens, watching the giant black engine with white steam spurting in



"Where's the City Hall?"

all directions, and the punchers jabbing the frightened cattle with poles, forcing them through the loading gates and into the slatted cattle cars.

Then we came into the town itself, which was mostly one long street—Texas Street, they called it—of saloons and barber shops and gambling parlors and dance halls. Some of the places were all four wrapped in one, with extra facilities upstairs for the fancy women who leaned out of the windows shouting at us as we rode by. The street was a mill of humanity and animals and wagons and hacks of every kind I ever saw, and a lot I had never seen before. Every man seemed to be cursing, and every jackass braying, every wagon squeaking, and every horse stomping. The whole place was a restless, surging pool of sound and excitement that got hold of you like a fever.

So this was Pappy's town. I didn't know if I liked it or not, but I didn't think I did. I didn't think the town would ever quiet down long enough to let a person draw an easy breath and be a part of it.

I couldn't help wondering what Pappy was going to do, now that he was here. Would he be crazy enough to walk up and kill the marshal of a town like this? I couldn't believe that Pappy would try a thing like that, not unless he knew he had some backing from somewhere. More backing than I would be able to give him.

But his face didn't tell me anything. A few curious eyes watched us as we pushed our way up the street, but most of the men were too intent on their own personal brand of hell-raising to pay any attention to us. At last Pappy pulled his big black in at the hitching rack near the middle of the block. I pulled Red in, pushing to make room between a bay and a roan.

We hitched and stepped up to the plankwalk, but before we went into the bar that Pappy was headed for, I said, "Pappy, don't you think this is damn foolishness, trying to take the marshal of a place like this?"

He looked at me flatly. "You don't have to go with me, son. This is just between Jim and me."

"I'm not trying to get out of anything," I said. "It just looks crazy to me, that's all."

Some men had stopped on the plankwalk to look at us. Perhaps they recognized Pappy, for they didn't loiter after Pappy had raked them with that flat gaze of his.

"You go buy yourself some clothes," Pappy said quietly. "I can take care of this."

He seemed to forget that I was there. He turned and pushed through the batwings of a place called the Mule's Head Bar, going in quick in that special way of his, and then stepping over with his back to the wall. I didn't think about it, I just went in after him. Somehow, Pappy's fights had got to be my fights. I hadn't forgotten the way he had taken care of the cavalry for me that time at Daggert's cabin.

We stood there on either side of the door, Pappy sweeping the place in one quick glance, taking in everything, missing nothing. "Well, son," he said, "as long as you've dealt yourself in, you might as well watch my back for me."

I said, "Sure, Pappy." But it looked like it was going to be a job. The saloon was a big place with long double bars, one on each side of the building. There were trail hands two and three deep along the bars seeing how fast they could spend their hard-earned cash, and the tables in the middle of the floor were crowded with more trail hands, and saloon girls, and slickers, and pimps, and just plain hardcases with guns on both hips and maybe derringers in their vest pockets.

Down at the end of the bars there was a fish-eyed young man with rubber fingers playing a tinny-sounding piano. The tune was *Dixie*, and a dozen or so cowhands were ganged around singing: "Oh! have you heard the latest news, Of Lincoln and his Kangaroos . . ." One of the million versions of the tune born in the South during the war.

The gambling tables—faro, stud, draw, chuck-a-luck, seven-up, every device ever dreamed up to get money without working for it—were back in the rear of the place. That was what Pappy made for. I hung close to the doors as Pappy wormed his way between the tables and chairs, trying to keep my eyes on the gallery—I didn't intend to let a gallery fool me again—and on the men with the most guns. Before Pappy had taken a dozen steps, you could feel a change in the place. It wasn't much at first. Maybe a man would be talking or laughing, then he'd look up and see those awful, deadly eyes of

Pappy's, and the talking or laughing would suddenly be left hanging on the rafters. One after another was affected that way, suddenly stricken with silence as Pappy moved by. By the time he had reached the gambling part of the saloon, the place was almost quiet.

I moved over to the bar on my left, keeping one eye on Pappy and the other on the big bar mirror to see what was going on behind me. Most of the men had turned away from the bar now, watching Pappy with puzzled expressions on their faces, as if they couldn't understand how a scrawny, haggard-looking man like that could draw so much attention. Then mouths began to move and you could almost feel the electricity in the place as the word passed along.

Somebody spoke to the men beside me. Automatically, the man turned to me and hissed, "It's Pappy Garret! He's after somebody, sure's hell!"

The men around the piano sang: "Our silken banners wave on high: For Southern homes, we'll fight and die." Still to the tune of *Dixie*. Their voices died out on the last word, the piano went on for a few bars, but pretty soon it died out, too. All eyes seemed to be on Pappy.

I didn't have any trouble picking Jim Langly out of the crowd. His eyes were wider, and his face was whiter, and he was having a harder time of breathing than anybody else in the place. When he had looked up from his poker hand and had seen Pappy coming toward him, he'd looked as if he was seeing a ghost.

And maybe he was, as far as he was concerned. Maybe he'd figured that Pappy would be dead on a creek bank by now, and all he had to do was wait for the reward money to come in and think up ways to beat Hagan out of his share.

He started to get up, then thought better of it, and sat down again. You could almost see him take hold of himself, force himself to be calm. He laid his cards face down on the table, fanning them carefully.

"Why, hello, Pappy," he said pleasantly.

He was a big, slack-faced man wearing the gambler's uniform of black broadcloth and white ruffled shirt. He wasn't wearing side guns, but there was a bulge under his left arm that looked about right for a .38 and a shoulder holster.

"Hello, Jim," Pappy said quietly. "I guess you didn't expect to see me coming in like this, did you?"

I thought I saw the marshal's face get a little whiter. "Nobody ever knows when to expect Pappy Garret," he smiled. One of his poker partners wiped his face uncomfortably, gathered in his chips, and eased away from the table. Langly pushed the empty chair out with his boot. "Sit down, Pappy. It's been a long time."

Pappy shook his head soberly. Carefully, I moved down the bar, looking for a place where I could do the impossible of covering the saloon with two guns. I saw that Langly was having trouble again getting his words out.

"What can I do for you, Pappy? Is there any trouble?"

"Maybe, Jim," Pappy murmured.

Marshal Langly wiped his face with a neat, clean handkerchief. "What is it, Pappy? What do you want?"

"I came to kill you," Pappy said softly.

The words were soft, but they hit Langly like a sledge. You could hear the wind go out of him, see his guts leak out. He groped for words, but there weren't any there.

"That's the way it goes with men like us, Jim. You tried to kill me and failed. A man only gets once chance in this business."

"Pappy, what the hell's wrong with you? I don't know what you're talking about!"

"Sure you do, Jim," Pappy went on in that velvety voice of his. "Hagan, our trail boss, came to you yesterday with a proposition. A profitable proposition for you, Jim—maybe fifteen thousand dollars, if you could figure out a way to keep Hagan from getting his split of the reward."

"How could I do anything to you, Pappy? Hell, I've been here all day playing draw."

"But not your deputies," Pappy said. "They're right on the job. The job you put them on."

The saloon seemed to be holding its breath. I glanced at faces around me. There were quizzical half-smiles on most of them, as if they thought it was all some kind of a big joke. I turned back to Pappy. I couldn't take my eyes off of him.

For a long moment he was silent, motionless. Langly was frozen. Then Pappy said, "You might as well draw, Jim."

The marshal's mouth worked, "Pappy, for God's sake!"

"I'll give you time to clear leather," Pappy went on, "before I make a move. That ought to make it about even."

"Pappy, listen to me!" The marshal was begging now, begging for his life. "Pappy, for God's sake, I had nothing to do with it!"

"I'll count to three," Pappy went on, as if he hadn't heard. Then something hard jabbed me in the small of the back.

I jumped, grunted instinctively. Pappy stiffened, but he didn't turn around. "What's the matter, son?" he asked quietly.

I had to tell him.

"Somebody's got a gun in my back," I said. "I'm sorry Pappy. I guess I'll never learn."

CHAPTER TEN

I couldn't see who was holding the gun, and I didn't turn around to look. The slightest movement, I knew, would only get me a sudden trip to Boothill.

Marshal Langly started to breathe again. He stopped sweating and shaking, and his face began to get some color. Suddenly he sat back and laughed out of pure relief.

"Pappy Garret," he chuckled after he caught his breath. "The notorious gunman!" Then his voice barked. "Unbuckle your cartridge belts and drop your pistols to the floor!"

Or I would get a bullet in the back, his eyes said.

For an instant I wondered if Pappy really cared what happened to me, as long as he could take his revenge out on Langly. But I didn't have to wonder long. Wearily, he unbuckled the belts and the pistols dropped at his feet.

"All right, Jim," he said tiredly. "I guess you've got it going your way now."

Langly had his own .38 out now. "You bet I have, Pappy. I've got it going my way and that's the way it's going to stay." He sat back, looking pleased with himself, "You didn't think your old friend, Jim Langly, would be the one to bring you to your knees, did you? Well, you were wrong, Pappy. You haven't got any friends—not even that kill-crazy kid you've been riding with. Sooner or later he would have turned on you, because he's just the same as you are."

He was enjoying himself now. Him with a pistol in his hand and Pappy's .44's on the floor. And me with a gun in my back. He wasn't afraid of anything now. He was a hero and enjoying every minute of it. But the crowd in the saloon was still too stunned to be sure that it wasn't a joke.

"You know what you are, Pappy?" the Marshal smiled. "You're a mad dog. You kill by instinct, the way a mad dog does. I'll be doing the whole country a favor by locking you up and turning you over to the Texas authorities."

My stomach sank. I might as well die here as on a carpetbag gallows.

But Pappy didn't move. He said, "I don't suppose the price on my head had anything to do with it."

Langly went on smiling. He could afford to smile now. He got up from the table and said, "All right, Bass, take the kid's guns and we'll lock them up."

The man behind moved around in front. When he got around to face me I was too startled to guess what was going on in Pappy's mind. The man was Bass Hagan.

He must have come into Abilene right behind me and Pappy, but he hadn't used the same trail we had. He stood there with the pistol in my belly, grinning that wide grin of his.

"The pistols," he said, "hand them over."

And then I began to get it. Pappy still had his back turned to me, but I knew what he must be thinking. I reached very carefully for my righthand pistol, slid it out of the holster.

"Butts first," Hagan grinned. He was the careful kind. He was standing back far enough so that I couldn't rush him, even if I was crazy enough to rush a man with a cocked pistol in his hand. "Just hand them over, kid," he said.

If he had known more about guns and gunmen he would have done as Langly had done, ordered me to unbuckle my belts. But he didn't know. I took the pistol by the barrel, slipping my finger into the trigger guard, and held it out. It had been a beautiful maneuver when Pappy had done it. But this time it wasn't Pappy. And the gun in my belly was loaded and cocked.

Maybe I would have handed the gun over if he hadn't been grinning. But he kept on grinning and I thought, there never would have been this trouble if it hadn't been for you. And my hand did the rest.

The pistol was just a blur as it whirled forward. The hammer snapped back as it hit my thumb on top of the turn, and fell forward.

I think Bass Hagan began to die before the bullet ever reached him. I could see death in his eyes even before the muzzle blast jarred the room, before the bullet slammed into his chest and he reeled back without ever pulling the trigger.

The shot affected the saloon customers like a stunning blow of a pole ax on a steer. They stood dumb, watching Hagan go to his knees and die, then fall on his face. Even Langly couldn't seem to move.

But Pappy could. He sliced across with the edge of his hand and sent the Marshal's little .38 clattering to the floor. A split second was all it took. I wheeled instinctively to turn my pistol on Langly, but Pappy said sharply:

"No, son!"

For some reason, I held my fire. Nobody but Pappy could have stopped me then. But Pappy's voice did it. I held the hammer back and my finger relaxed a little on the trigger.

Pappy said, "He's not worth wasting a bullet on." But his eyes, not his voice, put the real bitterness into the words. "Come along, son," he said, picking up his guns, "I guess Abilene's not our town after all."

Well, if that was the way Pappy wanted it . . . I started toward the doors, moving sideways, trying to keep my eyes on both sides of me and on the bar mirror on the opposite wall. Then Pappy said:

"Just a minute, son. The marshal will be going with us."

I began to get it then. With the marshal dead, our chances of getting out of Abilene would be cut down to nothing. But with the marshal going with us, under the threat of

sudden death if anybody tried to stop us, then maybe we could do it.

I waited, covering Pappy's retreat. Langly's mouth was working again. He looked as if he was going to be sick on the floor.

"Pappy, for God's sake, can't you take a joke?" he said quickly. "You don't really think I'd turn you over to the Texas police, do you?"

Pappy's face didn't show a thing. He reached out with a clawlike hand, grabbed the front of the marshal's ruffled shirt, and gave him a shove toward the door. Then he paused for just a moment to address our stunned audience.

"I don't guess it will take a lot of figuring," he said, "to guess what will happen to the marshal if anybody tries to follow us out of town." He waited another moment to make sure that they had it clear. Then he said, "All right, son, let's be moving."

I waited at the doors, keeping the crowd covered, while Pappy got our horses in the street. He said something under his breath and Langly got on a gray mare that had been hitched beside Red. It was funny, in a way. Men with guns on both hips, pushing and shoving in both directions on the plankwalk, and none of them bothering to give us a second look. I slammed the batwings then, turned and vaulted up to Red's back.

We fogged it down Texas Street in a wedge formation, Langley in the point and me and Pappy on both sides. Pappy let out an ear splitting yell like a crazy man, then drew one pistol and emptied it in the air. But Pappy wasn't so crazy. The crowd in the street, thinking we were drunk trail hands, scattered for the plankwalks, and we had a clear road to travel out of Abilene.

"Make for the dust!" Pappy yelled, pointing toward the low-hanging red clouds rising up from a herd coming in for shipment. I crowded Langly on my side, turning him to the west. I looked back once as we went into the dust, but nobody was coming after us yet.

I didn't like the idea of making a getaway along the trail of incoming herds. Too many people could see us. But pretty soon night came on and we didn't have to depend on the dust for concealment. Then we swung to the west, Langly still in the middle.

At last we came to a creek, and we stopped there to let our horses blow. Pappy seemed to be in good spirits again. He kept looking at the marshal with that half grin of his.

"Jim," he said, "it looks like your friends in Abilene are going to take our advice and look after your health." Then he added with mock soberness, "They sure must love you, Jim. But you always did have a way with people, I remember."

The marshal had got over his scare. I guess he already saw himself as good as dead, and there wasn't anything to be afraid of after that.

He said, "You'll never get away with it, Pappy. They'll get you. No matter where you go, they'll get you."

"Maybe," Pappy said mildly, "but I doubt it. I hear lawdogs don't go snooping around much in No Man's Land, down in the Oklahoma country."

Langly spat. "No Man's Land is a long way off."

I could almost see Pappy grinning in the darkness. I caught a glimpse of steel as he drew his righthand pistol, and I thought, without any emotion at all, this will be one more to add to Pappy's score.

But he didn't shoot. There was a blue blur in the night, and then a sodden thud as the pistol barrel crashed the marshal's skull. Langly dropped leadenly out of the saddle and hit the ground. Casually, Pappy holstered his .44.

"Now why the hell did you do that?" I said. "You're not going to leave him alive, are you?"

Pappy said, "Jim will do us more good alive than dead. When he gets back to Abilene, maybe he'll send a posse down to No Man's Land. But he'll have a hell of a time finding us there." He looked over to the east. "The Osage country," he said, "down in Indian Territory. That's where we'll make for. The Osages like the cavalry about as well as we do, and white man's law even less." He nodded. "That's the place to make for."

It was a long ride—half the width of Kansas—from Abilene to the northeastern border of the Oklahoma Country. But Pappy had traveled it before and he knew every foot of the trail, even at night. We left Langly on the creek bank with a knot on his head and without any pants. Taking the marshal's pants had been something that Pappy had thought of on the spur of the moment, and he still grinned as he thought about it. "Losing his pants," Pappy chuckled, "will be almost as bad on Jim as getting killed. Besides, he won't get back to Abilene in such a hurry if he has to scout around for a horse and another pair of pants."

By this time, doing the impossible, crossing half of Kansas when every law officer in the territory was out to get us, didn't surprise me. I had come to expect the impossible from Pappy. I began to suspect that he would live forever, even with the net drawing tighter and tighter around him all the time, because he knew instinctively what to do at exactly the right time. While Langly, and maybe the army, were cutting tracks all over Southeastern Kansas and No Man's Land, we were heading for Indian Territory.

And we made it, in that walk-canter-gallop system of march that Pappy had developed, traveling only at night and going to elaborate pains to cover our trail. We came to the wild-looking hill country, bristling with pine and spruce and hostile Indians—a place where not even the government agents dared to go without military escort. And not often then.

We found a natural cave about ten miles from the border, and Pappy said that was good enough. There was plenty of wild game to keep us eating, and water in a small stream for us and the horses.

I remember the day we rode into the place. Pappy stood in the mouth of the cave, grinning pleasantly, not bothered at all at the possibility of having to stay here for months before we dared venture out into civilization again.

"Well, son," he said, "this is going to be our home for a spell. We might as well settle down to getting comfortable."

I felt an emptiness inside me. A kind of hopelessness. I felt as if I had cut away the very last remaining tie to the kind of life I had known before. This was living like an animal, killing instinctively like an animal.

I tried to keep the sickness out of my voice as I said:

"Sure, Pappy. This is our home."

That was spring, in June, and it wasn't so bad at first. We made friends with some of the Osages. They were on our side the minute they learned that we were enemies of the white man's government. Sometimes they would bring us pieces of government issue beef, but not often, because the government didn't give them enough to stay their own hunger. Mostly, Pappy and I lived on rabbits that we trapped, or sometimes shot. Occasionally the Osages would bring us a handful of corn, and we would parch it over a fire and then grind it up and make a kind of coffee. Once in a great while, an Indian would overhear snatches of conversation about the white man's world and would relay the information to us.

It was in August, I remember, when we first heard that Davis was no longer the governor of Texas. But that didn't solve all my problems as I had once thought it would.

Pappy said, "Now don't try to rush things, son. It's going to take time to get the army out of Texas, even if Davis isn't governor any longer. And don't forget the Texas Rangers; they'll be taking the army's place. And the United States marshals . . ." Then he looked at me with those sad, sober eyes of his, and I knew the worst was yet to come.

He said slowly. "It won't ever be the same as it was before, son. They won't be forgetting that bluebelly cavalryman you killed, especially the government marshals."

I felt old familiar sickness in the pit of my stomach.

Pappy said, "Forget about this John's City place, son. You won't ever be able to go back there again. We'll head for the New Mexico country, or maybe Arizona, where nobody knows us." He laughed abruptly. "Who knows, maybe we'll turn out to be honest, hard-working citizens."

But he knew what I was thinking. And he said, "Forget about the girl, too, son. It will be the best for both of you."

I knew Pappy was right. I could look ahead and see how things would be from now on. But I couldn't forget Laurin. She was a part of me that I couldn't put away. Then Pappy's words hit me and I saw a new hope. We'll head for the New Mexico country, Pappy had said. Why couldn't Laurin go with us? If she loved me, if she believed in me, she would do that. I'd change my name and we could homestead a place in New Mexico. We could live like other people there . . .

Pappy was looking at me with those eyes that seemed to know everything. "Forget about her, son. Women just don't take men like us."

For a moment, I wondered if Pappy was speaking from experience. But that thought soon passed from my mind. The idea of Pappy ever being in love was too ridiculous to consider seriously. Besides, I couldn't forget Laurin any more than I could forget that I had a right arm. She was a part of me. She would always be a part of me.

And I suppose that Pappy saw how it was, and he didn't try to change my mind again.

But he insisted that we stay in our cave until the last of the cattle drives were made in the fall. By then, he said, the army should be out of Texas. If I was bound to go back to John's City, he said, winter would be the best time.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

So that was the way it was, because I had learned by this time that it didn't pay to act against Pappy's judgment. We watched August and September crawl by with painful slowness. Then came October with its sudden frosts and red leaves and sharp smells, and I think that was the hardest month of all.

And at last November came and Pappy went out to scout the country to the west, and when he came back he said we could try it, if I was still bound to go. It was a bitter cold night when at last we rode out of the hills and headed south, and we still had on the same clothes that we had worn for months. We were still without slickers, or coats of any kind. But I didn't mind the cold because I was going back to Texas again, to Laurin.

We crossed the Red River far west of Red River Station, on my nineteenth birthday, and Pappy said maybe that was a good sign.

Maybe we would make it to John's City and everything would work out after all. But he only said it with his voice, and not with his eyes.

Nineteen years old. I could just as well have been ninety. Or nine hundred. I didn't feel any particular age, in this country where age didn't mean much anyway. Men like Pappy, and Buck Creyton, could have notched their guns long before they were nineteen, if they had been the kind of men to make a show about it.

I was on familiar ground when we crossed the river and got into Texas again. I half expected Pappy to leave me there and go his own way toward New Mexico, but he only said, "We've been together now for a pretty good spell. I guess I wouldn't rest good without knowing how you made out."

It didn't occur to me to wonder what I was going to do or say when the time came to face Laurin.

I didn't know how I was going to explain away the reputation I'd got as a gunman, and it didn't worry me until we had come all the way and sighted the Bannerman ranch house in the distance.

And Pappy said, "Well, son, from here on in, I guess it's up to you."

Pappy knew what he was, the things he stood for. And he knew that he wouldn't do my cause any good if Laurin saw us together. And, for the first time, I saw Pappy as Laurin would have seen him—a hard, dirty old man with ratty gray hair hanging almost to his shoulders. A man in pitiful rags and tired to death of running, but not knowing what else to do. A man with no pride and no strength except in his guns.

Laurin would see only death in those pale gray eyes of Pappy's, missing the shy kindness that I knew was there, too. Laurin would look at Pappy and see me as I would be in a few more years.

I said, "Is this good-by, Pappy?"

He smiled faintly. "Maybe, son. Or maybe I'll see you again. You never know."

I said reluctantly, and Pappy could see the reluctance in my eyes and it made me ashamed, "You might as well come with me, Pappy. The Bannermans set a good table, and we both could use some grub."

But he shook his head. "You go on, son." We shook hands very briefly. "And good luck with that girl of yours." He jerked his big black around abruptly, and without a good-by, without a wave of his hand or a backward look, he rode back to the north.

I watched him until he disappeared behind a rise in the land, and I felt alone, and unsure, and a little afraid. Doubt began to gnaw at my insides.

Good-by, Pappy . . . Good luck.

I nudged Red gently and began riding over the flatland that I knew so well, toward the ranch house. Toward Laurin. As I got closer the uneasiness inside me got worse. For the first time in months, I was conscious of the way I looked—my own ragged clothes, my own shaggy hair hanging almost to my shoulders. And in contrast, my shining, well-cared-for pistols, tied down at my thighs. No pride and no strength except in his guns. That was the thought I had used in my mind to describe Pappy . . . and all along I had been describing myself.

For a moment, I was tempted to turn and ride as hard as I could until I caught Pappy. Pappy was my kind. We understood each other . . . But the thought went away. Clothes didn't make a gentleman. Long hair didn't make a killer. Laurin would understand that.

The thought of turning back went way, but not the feeling of uneasiness, as I got closer to the ranch house. I came in the back way, around by the barns and corrals, and a couple of punchers in the shoeing corral looked up and watched for a moment, and then went on about their work. They didn't even recognize me. More than likely they pegged me for a saddle tramp looking for a few days' work, and, knowing that Joe Bannerman never hired saddle tramps, lost interest.

Then, as I rode on through the ranch back yard, I saw a man come out of a barn with a saddle thrown over his shoulder, heading for a smaller corral near the house where the colts were kept for breaking. He glanced at me once without slowing his walk. Suddenly he stopped, looking at me. He waited until I pulled up alongside him, and then he said:

"My God, Tall!"

The man was Laurin's brother, Joe Bannerman. He looked at me as if he wasn't entirely sure that his eyes weren't playing tricks on him. He looked at Red who had been a glossy, well-cared-for show horse the last time he saw him, but whose coat was now shaggy and scarred in a thousand places where thorns and brush had raked his hide.

I tried to keep my voice light, but I knew that the change in me was even more shocking than in Red. I said, "How are you, Joe? I guess you might say the prodigal has returned."

But Joe Bannerman had no smile of welcome. He shifted the saddle down to the crook of his arm. "Tall, you're crazy! What do you mean, coming back to John's City like this?"

But he knew before I had time to answer. Laurin. Something happened to his face. He said, "Look Tall, if you know what's good for you, you'll get out of here in a hurry. There's nothing in John's City for you any more." Then he added. "Nothing at all."

"Don't you think that's up for somebody else to decide, Joe?"

"She's already decided," Joe Bannerman said roughly. "Next week she's getting married."

I stiffened. At first the words had no meaning, and then I thought: Joe never liked me. This is just his way of trying to get rid of me. I even managed a smile when I said:

"I guess I won't put much stock in that Joe, until I hear Laurin say it herself."

He glanced once at the house and then jerked his head toward the barn that he had come out of. "For God's sake, Tall, be sensible. Get that Red horse in the barn before somebody sees you."

There was something in his voice that made me rein Red over. I followed him, not quite knowing why, as he walked quickly to the other side of the barn, where the house was blocked from view. I dropped down from the saddle and said, "Now maybe you'll tell me what this is all about."

Joe Bannerman dropped his saddle to the ground and seemed to search for the right words. He said, "I don't want you to get the idea that I'm doing this for your benefit, because I don't give a good round damn what happens to you. But I don't want any trouble around here if I can help it." Then his voice got almost gentle. And I didn't understand that. "You ought to realize better than anybody else," he went on, "that things have changed since . . . since you went away from John's City. You're a hunted man, Tall, with a price on your head."

I said, "You wouldn't be having any ideas about that reward money, would you, Joe?"

"Don't be a damned fool!" he said angrily. "I just want to keep you from getting killed on my doorstep. Like I told you, there's nothing here for you. Why don't you just ride off and let us alone?"

"I'd still like to hear it from Laurin," I said, "before I do any riding." I started to turn toward the house again, but an urgency in Joe Bannerman's voice cut off the movement.

"Dammit, Tall, listen to me! I'm trying to tell you that it's all over between you and Laurin." Then he sighed wearily. "I guess you've got a lot of catching up to do. I'll try to give it to you as straight as I know how. Ray Novak's in that house, and he has orders from the federal government to get you. Ray was made a deputy United States marshal after the bluebellies were pulled out of Texas. I told you that things changed . . ."

I think I knew what was coming next. I tried to brace myself for it, but it didn't do any good when Joe Bannerman said, "It's Ray Novak that Laurin is in love with, Tall. Not you, She's afraid of you. You've got to be just a name on wanted posters, like this Pappy Garret that you've been riding with. You've got to be a killer, just like him." He shook his head. "I don't know, maybe you had a right to kill that policeman on account of your father. But all those others . . . What is it, Tall, a disease of some kind? Can't you ever turn your back on a fight? Don't you know any way to settle an argument except with guns?"

Then he looked at me for what seemed a long time. "I guess you don't even know what I'm talking about," he said. "That's the way you always were, never turning your back on a fight. And you never lost one before, did you, Tall? But you're losing one now. It's Ray Novak that Laurin's going to marry. Not you."

I stood dumbly for a moment before the anger started to work inside me. I still didn't believe the part about Laurin. A thing like ours couldn't just end like that. But Ray Novak—at the very beginning of the trouble it had been Ray Novak, and now at the end it was the same way. I started for the house again, but Joe Bannerman stepped in my path.

Tall, you can't go in there. Ray has been sworn in to get you."

I said tightly, "Get out of my way."

He didn't move.

I said, "This is my problem and I'll settle it my own way. If you try to stop me, Joe, I'll kill you."

His face paled. Then I thought I saw that look in his eyes that I had seen once before—just before he told me that Pa was dead. For some reason that I didn't understand, he was feeling sorry for me, and I hated him for it.

Slowly, he stepped back out of my way. He said quietly, "I believe you would. Killing me wouldn't mean any more to you than stepping on an ant. It wouldn't mean a thing to you."

"Don't be a damned fool," I said. But he had already stepped back, watching me with that curious mixture of awe and fear that I had come to expect from men like him. He didn't try to stop me as I went around the side of the barn and headed for the back steps of the house. Maybe he didn't feel it was necessary, because it was too late to stop anything now. Ray Novak was waiting for me at the back door.

If he had made the slightest move I would have killed him right there. I realized that I had never really hated anybody but him. It would have been a pleasure to kill him, and I knew I could do it, no matter how much training his pa had given him with guns. But he didn't make a move. He didn't give me the excuse, and I'd never killed a man yet who hadn't made the first move.

He said mildly, "I guess you better come in, Tall."

He was just a blurred figure behind the screen door and I couldn't see what his eyes were saying. Then another figure appeared behind him. It was Laurin.

Woodenly, I went up the steps, opened the screen door, and stepped into the kitchen. Laurin was standing rigidly behind Ray, and

I thought: She's grown older, the same as I have. Those large eyes of hers were no longer the eyes of a girl, but of a woman who has known worry and trouble and—at last I placed it—fear. She had changed in her own way almost as much as I had changed. Only Ray Novak seemed the same.

Ray said, "We don't want any trouble, Tall. Not here. Maybe it's best that you came back this way and we can get things settled once and for all."

Laurin said nothing. She didn't move. She looked at me as if she had never seen me before, and in my mind I heard Joe Bannerman saying: There's nothing for you here in John's City. Nothing at all. But I fought back the sickness inside me. Laurin had loved me once, that was all that mattered. She still loved me. Nothing could change that.

Ray Novak moved his head toward the parlor. "Do you want to come in here, Tall? We've got a lot to say and not much time to say it in. My pa is coming in from town in a few minutes to pick me up in the buckboard. We'll have to get everything settled before then."

I said, "I can settle with you later. This is just between me and Laurin."

I looked at her and still she didn't move. I couldn't tell what she was thinking. At last she said, "It's Ray's affair as much as ours, Tall. You see, we're going to be married."

I guess a part of me must have died then. Joe Bannerman had said it and I hadn't believed it. Now it was Laurin herself, telling me as soberly as she knew how that it was all over between us, and I knew that this time it was the truth. I wasn't sure what I felt, or what I wanted to do about it. I suppose I wanted to go to her, to take hold of her with my hands and shake some sense into her. Or hold her close and make her see that it wasn't over with us, that it never would be. But her eyes stopped me. Perhaps she had expected something like that, and I saw that look of fear come out and look at me. She started backing away. She was afraid of me.

Ray Novak said, "I wanted you to know about me and Laurin before I went out looking for you. I didn't want you to think that I was going around behind your back. . . ."

I shoved him aside with the flat of my hand and took Laurin's arm before she could back away. She tried to twist out of my grasp, but I held on and jerked her toward me. Anger like I've never known before was swelling my throat. I said, "Tell him to get out of here! If he doesn't, so help me God I'll kill him where he stands!"

Ray Novak started to step forward. Instinctively, his hand started to move toward his gun, and I was praying that he would follow through with the motion. But Laurin said:

"Ray!"

And he stopped. Then something strange happened to Laurin. A moment before her eyes were bright and shiny with fear, but now they showed nothing.

She said, "Ray, do as he says."

Ray Novak's face darkened. "I'm not leaving you alone with him. He's crazy. There's something wrong and mixed up and rotten in that head of his."

"Ray, please!"

He hesitated for another moment. Then he relaxed. "All right, Laurin. Whatever you say. But I'll be outside if . . ."

He left the rest unsaid. He turned and went out the back door, taking up a position a few paces away from the back steps.

I heard myself laugh abruptly. "So that's the man you're going to marry! A man with a yellow streak up his back that shows all the way through his shirt!"

But I stopped. That wasn't what I wanted to say at all. Anyway, I knew that Ray Novak wasn't yellow. He might be a lot of things, but a coward wasn't one of them.

Laurin said, "Tall, you're hurting me."

I turned loose her arm. My thoughts were all mixed up in my mind and I couldn't get the words arranged to tell her what I wanted to say. I found myself standing there dumbly, rubbing my face with my hands and wondering how I was going to explain it to her. If I could only explain it in a way she could understand, then everything would be all right again. But she didn't give me a chance to get my thoughts arranged.

She said flatly, "Why don't you go away, Tall? Go far away so that we'll never see you or hear from you again. Ray will give you that chance, because he knows what you meant to me once. He has been sworn in as a special deputy to get you. He's working for the government, Tall, a United States marshal—but he'll give you a chance if you'll only take it."

I said, "I don't need any favors from Ray Novak!" But that wasn't what I wanted to say, either, "Laurin, Laurin, what's wrong? What have they said . . . what have they done to turn you against me like this?"

She shook her head, a bewildered look in her eyes. "You actually believe that your trouble is caused by other people, don't you?"

Think? I knew there wouldn't have been any trouble if it hadn't been for the Creytons, and Thorntons, and Hagans, and Novaks. But how could I explain that to her? Women didn't understand things like that. I remembered what my ma had said, long ago, about my fight with Cris Bagley: But Tall why didn't you run?

I said quickly, "Laurin, listen to me. This isn't the end of us. It's only the beginning. It won't be the same as we planned, but we can make it good. We can be together." I took her arm, gently this time, and she didn't try to pull away. "They'll never catch me," I said. "The army, Ray Novak, nobody else. We'll go away. Pappy knows a place in New Mexico. We can go there. We'll be together, that's the only thing that counts. You don't mean it about marrying Ray Novak, it's just because you've heard wrong things about me. You love me, not him."

The words came rushing out in senseless confusion, and they stopped as abruptly as they had begun. The look of bewilderment went out of Laurin's eyes, and amazement took its place.

"Love you?" she said strangely. "I don't even know you. I don't suppose I ever knew you. Not really, the way you get to know people and understand them, and be a part of them. You're . . ." She shook her head helplessly. "You're nobody I ever saw before. You're some wild animal driven crazy—by the smell of blood."

Her voice was suddenly and painfully gentle, cutting worse than curses. She dropped her head.

"I'm sorry I said that, Tall."

But she meant it. She didn't try to get out of that. I turned loose of her and walked woodenly to the door. I pushed the door open, went down the steps and into the yard.

Ray Novak said, "Tall."

I went on toward the barn where I had left Red. I don't know where I thought I was going from there. To catch up with Pappy, maybe, and try to make it to New Mexico with him. Maybe I wasn't going anywhere. It didn't make any difference.

Ray Novak caught up with me as I was about to climb back into the saddle. "I'd better tell you the way things are," he said. "I'm giving you a day's start to get out of John's City country. Then I'll be coming after you, Tall."

I said flatly, "Don't be a damned fool all your life. I don't want any favors from you. I'm right here. Take me now if you think you can."

He shook his head. "That's the way Laurin wants it." He hesitated for a moment, then added, "Don't underrate me, Tall. I've learned things about guns and gunmen since you saw me last. I won't be as easy as Hagan, and Paul Creyton, and some of the others. Don't think that I will, Tall."

"You and your damned two bullets in a tin can," I said. "You don't even know what

"I have an announcement to make."

shooting is. But I'll teach you. You come after me and I'll teach you good, Ray."

I got up to the saddle and rode south, without looking back. Without thinking, or wanting to think. I didn't know where I was going and I didn't care. I just knew that I had to get away and I had to keep from thinking about Laurin. I should have hated her, I suppose. But I couldn't. And I suppose I should have killed Ray Novak while I had the chance, but, somehow, I couldn't do that either. Not with Laurin looking. I felt a hundred years old. As old as Pappy Garret, and as tired. But, like Pappy, I had to keep running.

I didn't see the buckboard until it was too late. And by that time, I didn't care one way or another. It was old Martin Novak coming up the wagon road from Garner's store, and I vaguely remembered Ray saying that his pa was coming by the Bannermans' to pick him up. I had forgotten all the rules that Pappy had gone to so much trouble to teach me. I let him get within fifty yards of me before I even noticed him, and by that time things had boiled down to where there was only one way out.

It's the same thing all over again, I thought dumbly. But they never understand that.

Nobody could understand it, unless maybe it was Pappy, or others like him. The monotonous regularity with which it happened would almost have been funny, if it hadn't been so deadly serious. It was like dreaming the same bad dream over and over again until it no longer frightened you or surprised you—you merely braced yourself as well as you could, because you knew what was going to happen next.

Martin Novak had the buckboard pulled across the road. I could just see the top of his head and the rifle he had pointed at me, as he stood on the other side, using the hack for a breastwork.

"Just keep your hands away from your pistols, Tall," he called, "and ride this way, slow and easy."

I didn't have a chance against the rifle, not at that range. But I felt a strange calm. I never doubted what would happen next. I didn't even wonder how it would end this time, because this time I knew.

But I played it straight, the way Pappy would have done. I said, "What's this all about? What's that rifle for, anyway?"

"I think you know, Tall," he called. "Now just do as I say. Ride in slow and easy, and keep your hands away from your guns."

I nudged Red forward, keeping my hands on the saddle horn. If it had been Pappy, he would have been wearing his pistols for a saddle draw, high up on the waist, with the butts forward. I had forgotten to make the switch, but even that didn't bother me now. I looked at Martin Novak and thought: There's only one way, I guess, to teach men like you to leave us alone.

When I got within about twenty yards of the buckboard, he motioned me to stop. He was wondering how he was going to disarm me, and probably remembering stories he had heard about what had happened to Bass Hagan.

He said, "I don't want to have to kill you, Tall, but I will if you don't do exactly as I say. Now just reach with one hand, where I can see, and unbuckle your cartridge belts."

I said, "Just a minute, Mr. Novak. Hell, I never did anything to you."

He raised up from behind the buckboard and I could see the star pinned to his vest. The Novaks and their damned tin stars, I thought.

"It's more than that, Tall," he said solemnly. "You're wanted by the law. It's my job to arrest you, and that's what I intend to do." He studied my hands, which still hadn't moved toward my belt buckles. But he still had that rifle aimed at the center of my chest, and he wasn't too worried.

He said, "You've . . . been to the Bannermans', I guess."

I said, "Yes. I've been there."

He nodded soberly. "Ray shouldn't of done it," he said thoughtfully, almost to himself. "He should of took you in himself. But," he added, "I guess Laurin wanted you to have one more chance."

I said, "I guess she did." I didn't particularly want to kill him. I didn't have anything against him except that he insisted on making my business his business. And if I killed him I knew I wouldn't get that day's start that Ray Novak had promised. But that didn't bother me. Ray Novak could come after me any time he felt like it. I was ready for him.

For a moment, I thought I'd try to talk the old man out of it, but I knew that it wouldn't do any good. Like Pappy, I had grown tired of trying to talk to people in a language that they didn't understand. It was easier to let my guns speak for me.

"There's no use holding off, Tall," the old man said soberly. "Just go on and drop your guns."

I looked for a brief moment behind my shoulder. I could still see the Bannerman ranch house. A shot would be heard there, if I was forced to shoot. Maybe they were even watching us. It was possible that Ray Novak was already getting a horse saddled to come after us and try to stop it.

I didn't care one way or another. I had stopped caring about anything when Laurin cut herself away from me. What was there to care about?

I said, "All right, Mr. Novak. I guess you win."

I could see relief in his eyes as I began to unbuckle my lefthand gun. He was slightly surprised and because of my reputation, maybe a little disappointed because I gave up so easy. But he was relieved. And the relieved are apt to be careless.

I unslung the cartridge belt, but instead of dropping it, I handed it down to him. Instinctively, he reached for it, pulling his rifle out of line.

Marshal Martin Novak was a smart man. He caught his mistake almost immediately. But by that time it was already too late. He was off balance, in no good position to use either pistol or rifle. He knew that he was going to die before I ever made a move toward my other .44. I saw death in those dark, solemn little eyes of his. I thought, You've got all the time in the world. Take your time and do a good job of it. And then I shot him.

The bullet went in just above his shirt pocket on the left side, and he slammed back against the buckboard. The team scampered nervously for a moment, but I pulled Red over in front of them and quieted them down. Martin Novak went to his knees, held himself up for an instant with his hands, then fell with his face in the dust. He didn't move after that.

I sat there for a moment looking at him. Red was nervous and wanted to pitch, but I reined him down roughly with a heavy hand. I heard myself saying:

"I didn't want to kill you, Mr. Novak, but, damn you, why couldn't you let me alone?"

Then I realized that he couldn't hear me. And I knew that before long somebody would start wondering about that pistol shot. I pulled Red around and headed west toward the hills.

Instinct, I suppose, made me head for the place that had given me protection before, Daggert's Road. It was a fool thing to do probably, because that would be the first place Ray Novak would look for me, but I couldn't think of anything else. I headed straight for the hills, skirting the arroyo, raking Red's ribs cruelly with the rowels of my spurs, even though he was already running as fast as he could.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I looked back once and saw little feathers of dust rising up around the Bannerman ranch yard, and I knew that would be Ray Novak and some ranch hands pulling out to see what the shooting was about. Well, they would find out soon enough, but by that time I would be in the hills. . . .

Suddenly, all thoughts jarred out of me. The world became a whirling, crazy thing, and I crashed to the ground and the wind went out of me. For a moment I lay stunned, gasping for breath. I shook my head, trying to clear it. After a while I tried moving my arms and legs. They were all right. I just had the breath knocked out of me. Finally, I pulled myself to my knees and looked around. And then I saw Red.

He lay quietly behind me, looking at me with big liquid eyes, full of hurt. "Red, boy! What's the matter?"

I dragged myself to my feet and limped over to him. His right foreleg was twisted under him. His blood was staining the ground; and I glimpsed the awful whiteness of bone that had broken through the hide. Then I saw what had happened. Because of that crazy run I had forced him to over this rough ground, he hadn't been able to judge the distance correctly. He had been thrown off balance at a small gully jump that ordinarily he would have taken in stride. His leg had snapped as he went down.

For that moment I didn't wonder how I was going to get away from the posse that was sure to be coming. I knelt beside Red, taking his head in my arms and rubbing my hands along his satiny neck and shoulders. "It's all right, boy. Everything's going to be all right." But those hurt eyes knew I was lying. I loved that horse more than I loved most people. Red was all I had left. And now I didn't even have him.

I think I would have cried—sitting there on the ground, holding Red's head in my lap—like some small child who had broken its best-loved toy in a moment of anger, not realizing what the loss would mean until it was too late. But then I looked down on the flatland and I could see Ray Novak and the others ganged around the buckboard. They were the ones responsible, I thought bitterly. Not me.

I stood up slowly, anger making a red haze of everything. I could see them wheeling now, not much more than specks in the distance, and head in my direction. I thought. Let them come! It all started with Ray Novak—let it end with him. I was ready to meet him where I stood. I was eager.

Then a voice said: 'You'd better come along, son. There's not much time."

I wasn't particularly surprised. I had come to expect the impossible of Pappy. I turned and looked up the slope, and there he was, sitting that big black of his, mildly rolling one of those corn-shuck cigarettes. He nudged his horse gently and rode on down to where I was, seeming entirely unconcerned with the posse charging across the flatland toward us. He glanced once at Red, and then looked away.

"I'm sorry, son," he said gently. "He was a good horse."

"Pappy, for God's sake, what are you doing here?"

He shrugged slightly. "It's a long trail to travel by yourself."

It was the closest thing to sentiment, or regret, or fear, that I had ever heard in Pappy's voice. From the very first, I figured that Pappy had picked me up because he needed a kind of personal body guard, but I knew now that it wasn't that. It had never occurred to me before that a man like Pappy could be lonesome. That he needed friends like other people.

I said, "Pappy, get out of here! Go on to New Mexico, or wherever you were going. You can't help me now."

But he only smiled that sad, half smile of his. Then he shook a boot out of a stirrup and held it out. "Just step up here," he said. "I guess this black horse won't mind riding double for a little piece."

"Pappy, you're crazy. You can't expect to outrun a posse by riding double."

He shrugged again. "But we can find a better place than this to fight from. Come on, son. There isn't much time."

Pappy's word was law. I knew that he wouldn't budge until I did as he said. Dumbly, I put my foot in the stirrup and swung up behind him.

I glanced at the posse. They were already in rifle range, but they were holding their fire until they had us cold. Then I looked at Red, knowing, what I had to do, but not knowing if I had the guts for it.

"Just look away, son," Pappy said softly.

There was one pistol shot, and Red lay still.

Good-by Red. Good-by to the last thing I ever gave a damn about, except Pappy. And I wasn't even sure that I cared a damn about Pappy. Maybe he was just something to hold to, a device that men like us used in order to live a little while longer. I felt empty and angry and there wasn't much sense to anything.

The big black took us as far as the top of the ridge, and that was the end of the line. We could hear the hoofs pounding now as Ray Novak pushed his posse of ranch hands on up into the hills after us. The black was a good horse—as good as Red, maybe—but he couldn't carry two men and be expected to outrun the sturdy range horses chasing us. When we hit the crest of the rise Pappy dumped out of the saddle, clawing that fancy rifle of his out of the saddle boot. I came off after him and the black went on down to the bottom of the slope.

"Over here, son!" Pappy yelled. And when I stopped rolling I saw that he already had a private fortress picked out for us. Three big rocks gave us cover on three sides and we could sweep the hill with fire in all directions. As I crawled up beside him, Pappy already had that rifle in action. He fired twice and two of the posse dumped out of their saddles and lay still. That cut the original five down to three, and I thought maybe we would get out of this after all, if we could catch one of the loose horses, and get rid of Ray Novak.

But Novak and the two ranch hands began to scatter before Pappy could cut any more of them down. They scrambled for rocks near the base of the hill and for a few moments it was quiet. Those two dead riders gave them something to think about before trying anything foolish.

Pappy looked at me, grinning slightly. "Well," he said, "we've been in worse places. That's always some consolation, they say."

I said nothing. I searched the land below us, but nobody was moving. It was quiet—deadly quiet. I wondered what Ray Novak was thinking down there. The Novaks and their tin badges! After looking at his pa, he would know that tin badges didn't make a man immune from bullets.

Pappy stacked his rifle against the rock, got out his makings, and began to roll a cigarette, like a man knocking off work for a few minutes to take a breather. There was no way of knowing what he was thinking. For a moment he stared flatly down the side of the slope; then he looked at me.

"It didn't work out, did it, son?" he said. "I didn't think it would, but I was hoping. . . ."

I knew he was talking about Laurin. And I didn't want to talk about Laurin. I didn't want to think about her.

Nodding his head toward the bottom of the hill, he said, "He got her, didn't he?" meaning Ray Novak. "I think maybe I knew from the first that he would. It was just a feeling, I guess, after you told me how things were."

"Cut it off, will you, Pappy?" I said angrily.

"Sure, son, I didn't mean to butt in." He sat back against the rock, with that cigarette dangling between his lips. "He's a good man, though," he said thoughtfully. "He damn near put a bullet in me that day. Probably he's learned some things since then. I don't think I'd be in any hurry to stand up to him now."

"He's a damned tin soldier riding behind a tin badge," I said. "His pa was the same, but he died just as easy as anybody else."

Pappy's eyes widened. "You killed his old man?"

"Sure I did. He tried to arrest me."

Pappy shook his head sadly from side to side. "Maybe we're going to have trouble," he said heavily. "Maybe we're going to have more trouble than we ever saw before."

It was still quiet down on the slope. I said, "This is no good. We can't run, and we can't fight if they don't come out from behind those rocks. But we can't just sit here. By now, somebody from the ranch will be headed toward John's City for more help. We've got to get away from here before that comes."

Pappy nodded and spat out his cigarette. Then a horse nickered back behind us and I could almost see Pappy's ears prick up. "Just a minute," he said. "I'd better look after that black of mine."

He crawled on his hands and knees to the naked side of the hill and peered down below. Suddenly, something jabbed me in the back of the brain. Intuition, they call it. Or hunch. Some men have it and some don't. Sometimes, when it hits you, it tells you to put your stack on the red and all you have to do is watch the roulette ball drop in. Or it may tell you that around the next corner is sudden death. When I felt it, I whirled and yelled:

"Pappy, look out!"

But the moment had passed. It had come and gone and I hadn't got my bet down in time. I heard a rifle crack in the afternoon, and I turned just in time to see Pappy go down.

"Pappy!" I yelled again.

But I knew it was too late. I ran over to where he was, silhouetting myself against the sky, but not caring now. Then I saw the rifleman—that sober, stone-cold face that was past anger, or grief, or any emotion at all. It was Ray Novak.

I didn't stop to wonder how he had slipped around to the naked side of the hill. He had done it, and that was enough. Dumbly, he was looking at me now. Probably, he had figured it out cold and clear in his mind what he was going to do to me when he caught me, but suddenly finding himself face to face with me startled him. And that was Ray Novak's mistake. I shot before he could swing the rifle around.

I watched as the bullet slammed into his shoulder, jerking him around. He went to his knees and began tumbling down the side of the hill.

Instinct told me that he wasn't dead. There was only a bullet in his shoulder and that wouldn't stop him for long. But before I could do anything about it, the two ranch hands were drawn around to the naked side of the hill by the shooting. I aimed very carefully at one of them. I could see horror in his eyes as he started backing away, too scared to use the gun in his hand. I pulled the trigger and he fell away somewhere out of my line of vision. I forgot about him.

I didn't bother about the other posse member. Like a damned fool, he forgot that I was in perfect position to kill him and went running across the open ground to where Ray Novak was stretched out unconscious. For a moment I watched as he pulled Novak out of the line of fire and I thought: Let him go, there's no use killing him. I knew he would get Ray back to the ranch house as soon as he could, and that would take care of the last of the posse. And, anyway, there had been so much killing, maybe I had lost the stomach for it. Then I remembered Pappy.

He was crumpled at my feet as limp and lifeless as a discarded bundle of dirty clothing. I turned him over gently and straightened his long legs. "Pappy!"

But he didn't move. And a sick feeling inside told me that Pappy wasn't going to move. The bullet had gone right through the middle, about three inches above his belt buckle, but there was only a little blood staining his dirty blue shirt. All the bleeding, I knew, would be on the inside. I felt his throat for a pulse and it was so faint that I imagined that it wasn't there at all. After a moment the glassiness that was beginning to crowd his eyes receded just a little, and that was my only way of knowing that he wasn't dead.

I didn't know what to do. There was nothing I *could* do, except to stay there beside him and not let him die all alone, the way he had lived. I didn't even have a drink of water to give him. I couldn't think of anything to say that might make it any easier. Down at the base of the hill, I could hear a horse scampering and I knew that would be the ranch hand taking Ray Novak back to the ranch house. Soon it was quiet again, except for the dirgelike mourning of the wind and the rattle of dry grass.

I knelt there watching the glassiness returning to Pappy's eyes. Vaguely, I wondered what his last thoughts were, if there were any thoughts. I wondered if I was a part of them. Was there any sorrow, or regret, or dismay at the way he had used his life? Would he use it any differently if he had the chance to live it all over again?

I got my answer when, for just an instant, his eyes cleared. He looked at me, smiling that sad, half smile. Then he spoke quietly, precisely, as if he had thought the matter over for a long time.

"You were right, son. I should have killed him that day . . . when I had the chance."

So that was the way Pappy died—with no dismay and only one regret—sorry only that he had made the mistake of leaving a man alive. I stood up slowly, looking up at the endless sky. I think maybe I wanted to pray for Pappy—but what was there to say? Who was there to listen?

Good-by, Pappy. That was all I could think of. The wind moaned, cutting through my thin clothing, and I realized that winter had at last come to Texas. Winter was the time for dying. I bent down and closed Pappy's staring eyes. Sleep, Pappy. You can rest now, for there will be no more running for you. And Pappy's quiet face said that he was not sorry.

I left Pappy there on the hilltop with the wind and the sound of the grass. I took his rifle and went down to the bottom of the slope and found his big black horse trembling like a whipped kid down in the bottom of a gully. I said, "Easy, boy," and stroked his sleek neck until he quieted down, and then I swung up to the saddle.

I headed west again, higher into the hills,

and not looking back at the hill where Pappy lay. Pappy was gone. Nothing could be done about that. First my pa, then Laurin, and now Pappy. I had lost them all, as surely as if they were all dead, and in the back of my mind one name kept burning my brain, Ray Novak.

I didn't bother to cover my tracks. I purposely left a trail that a blind pilgrim could have followed, because I knew that before long Ray Novak would be coming after me. It would be only a matter of hours before he got his shoulder patched up, and I knew him well enough to know that he wouldn't allow a posse to track me down. He would do it himself. That was the kind of man he was. And that was the way I wanted it—just me and Ray Novak.

I found the place I wanted, a ragged bluff overlooking the lowland trail that I had been following, but I traveled on past it for a mile or more and then circled around to approach the bluff from the rear.

It was perfect for what I wanted to use it for. I could see all approaches to the bluff, and anybody passing along the trail I had taken would have to come within easy rifle range. That was the important thing. All I had to do was wait.

And think.

I tried to keep my mind blank except for the job I had to do, but I couldn't keep the thoughts dammed up any longer. I couldn't go on shutting Laurin out of my mind and pretending that she never existed. She had existed, but she didn't any more. Not for me. I had lost her, and where she had once been there was only emptiness and bitterness. I had to admit it some time, and it might as well be now.

The hours were lonesome dragging things up there on the bluff, and the wind was cold. The wind died as night came on, but the chill was worse and I didn't dare risk a fire. There was nothing to do but wait.

The night became bitter cold, and a frost-white moon came out and looked down upon the bluff. That night I learned what it was to be alone. And I learned something else—that fear grows in lonely places. I hadn't let myself think about it before, but now I began to wonder why I had chosen this way to take out my hate on Ray Novak. Why didn't I wait for him on the trail and face it out with him, the way I had done with Buck Creyton?

The night and the moon, I suppose, had the answer. I was alone. And nobody really gave a damn whether I lived, but a great many people were wishing me dead. There was no comfort in anything except perhaps the feel of my guns, but that wasn't much help. I could hear Pappy saying: Maybe we're going to have more trouble than we ever saw before. Pappy was dead, and Ray Novak was still alive. He damned near put a bullet in me that day, Pappy had said, and probably he's learned some things since then.

Then Ray himself saying: I won't be easy, Tall. . . .

I was scared. Worse than that, I was scared and I wouldn't admit it.

Somehow the long night wore itself out, and dawn came at last, cold and gray in the east. I got through the night without running, and that was something. I wondered how many more nights there would be like that one, and cold sweat broke out on the back of my neck.

But with the daylight it was better. The sun warmed me, and Pappy's rifle had a comforting feel in my hands again. And, instinctively, I knew that I wouldn't have much longer to wait.

But it was almost noon when I finally saw him. He came riding out of the south, along the trail I had left for him, and suddenly I realized that it would be so easy that I was amazed at the worrying I had done the night before. The distance, I judged, was about two hundred yards—not close, but plenty close enough if you had a rifle like Pappy's. I took a practice aim, judging the distance and the wind, and adjusted the leaf sight on the rifle.

I won't be easy, Tall, he'd said. Well, we'd see about that.

I waited until he reached the top of the grade before I brought him into the sights again. And then I had him, the center of his chest framed in the V of the rear sight, the knob of the front sight resting on the bottom of his left shirt pocket. It was a beautiful thing, this rifle of Pappy's. Once I had thought that a man would almost be glad to get killed by a gun like that, if he had any kind of love for firearms. I wondered how Ray Novak would feel about that.

I drew my breath in until my lungs had all they would take. Then I held it. The sights were still on the target. All I had to do was squeeze the trigger.

But I waited. A few seconds one way or the other wouldn't make any difference. I studied the man in my gunsights, the man who had all the things that could have been mine. Security, respect, and most important of all, Laurin. If it hadn't been for Ray Novak, all of them could have been mine. Now was the time to pull the trigger.

But I didn't. Sudden anger caused the rifle to waver, and I had to let my breath out and go through the whole thing all over again.

Laurin . . . I could have had her, if it hadn't been for him. Maybe I could still have her, with Novak out of the way for good. But that thought went out of my mind before it had time to form. She had showed clearly enough what she felt for me—fear, and maybe a kind of pity. I didn't want that.

For a moment, while the sights were settling again, I wondered what Laurin would do, what she would say, when they brought Ray Novak's body in with a bullet through his heart. I wondered if being hated was worse than being feared.

I told myself to stop thinking. Squeeze the trigger, that was all I had to do. But my finger didn't move. I had never thought of it that way before. It was little enough, but at least she didn't hate me. Not yet.

And she wasn't alone. That was important now, because I was beginning to learn what it was to be alone. And I guess that was when I began to understand that I wouldn't pull the trigger to kill Ray Novak. Somehow, in killing him it would be like killing a part of Laurin. . . .

I snapped the leaf sight down on the rifle. I'm sorry, Pappy. I guess my guts are gone.

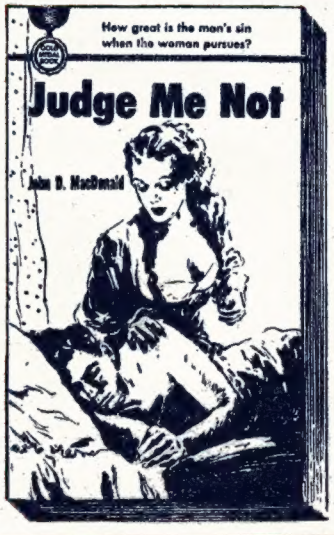
And up on that hilltop with the moaning wind and rattling grass, I imagined that Pappy smiled that sad smile of his.

I watched Ray Novak until he was out of range, out of sight, and I wondered emptily, if he would keep looking for me until he finally found me. As long as he was a United States marshal he would keep looking. I knew that. The hurt and the hate would burn themselves out in time, but not that sense of duty that the Novaks prided themselves on.

Then I had a sudden, strange feeling that, somewhere, Laurin wasn't fearing me any more. Nor hating me. It occurred to me that a man didn't have to stay a United States marshal—especially if his wife was against it.

But there was little comfort in the thought. If it wasn't Novak, there would always be others. The army, the sheriffs, the bounty hunters. Or punk kids wanting to make reputations for themselves.

I thought of Pappy then, not with sorrow, but with a feeling near to envy. I went over to that big black horse of his and stroked his neck for a moment before climbing on. I holstered the rifle, checked my pistols, and then we headed west.



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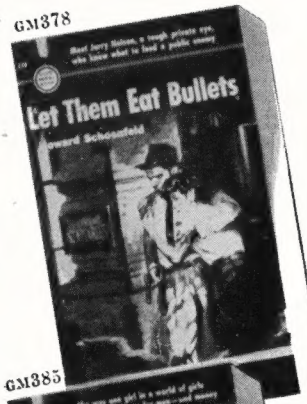

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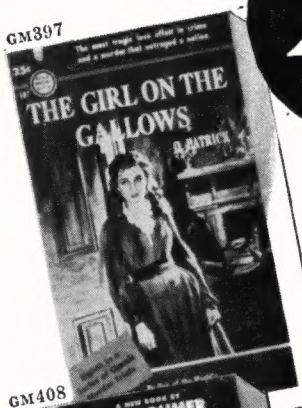

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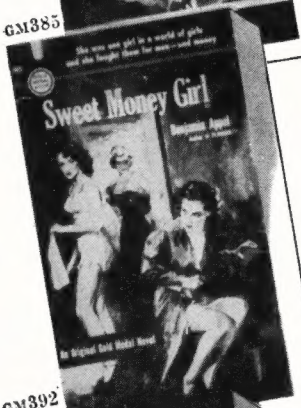

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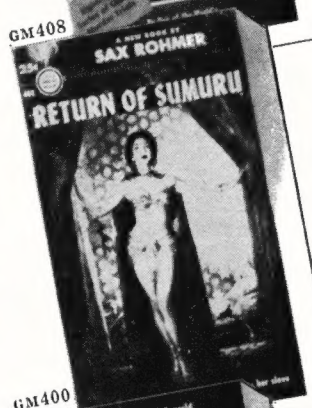

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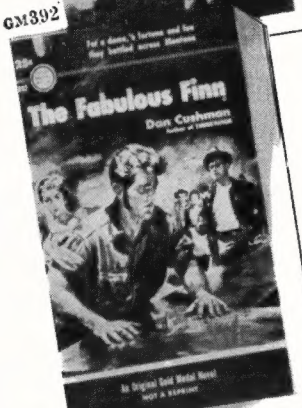

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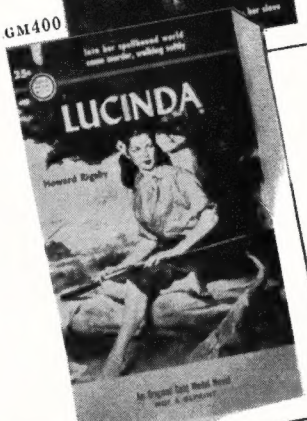

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